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(54) **ACCESS SYSTEM WITH REMOVABLE
OUTFLOW CHANNEL**

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17/3462 (2013.01)

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See application file for complete search history.

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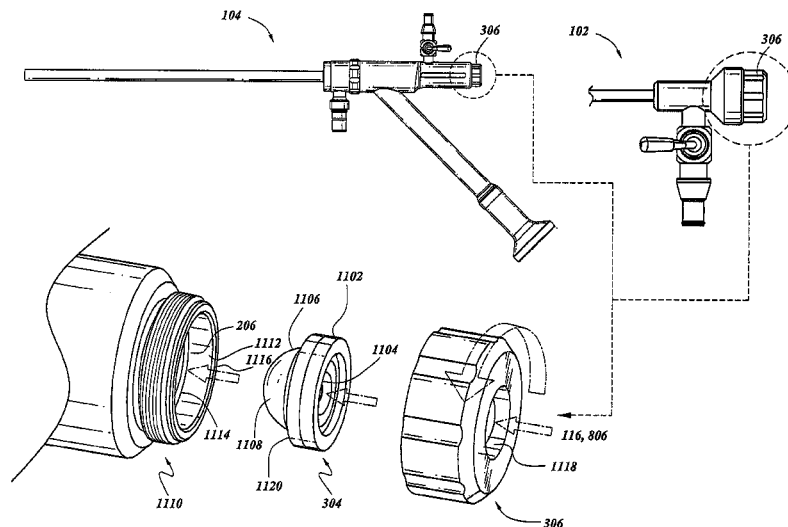
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A surgical access device can comprise a working channel
providing a first lumen having an axial opening for insertion
of a surgical instrument having an outflow channel, the first
lumen having a fluid inlet for allowing fluid flow through the
working channel and into the body, wherein fluid flows out of
the body through the outflow channel of the surgical instru-
ment; and an optical channel providing a second lumen for a
visualization element and a light source, wherein the working
channel comprises a larger cross-sectional area than the
cross-sectional area of the optical channel. The surgical
access device can further comprise a seal apparatus coupled
to the working channel and configured to receive the surgical
instrument, the seal apparatus comprising a first seal portion
and a second seal portion, the first seal portion configured to
close the fluid path into the seal apparatus, and the second seal
portion configured to form a seal with the surgical instrument.

14 Claims, 17 Drawing Sheets



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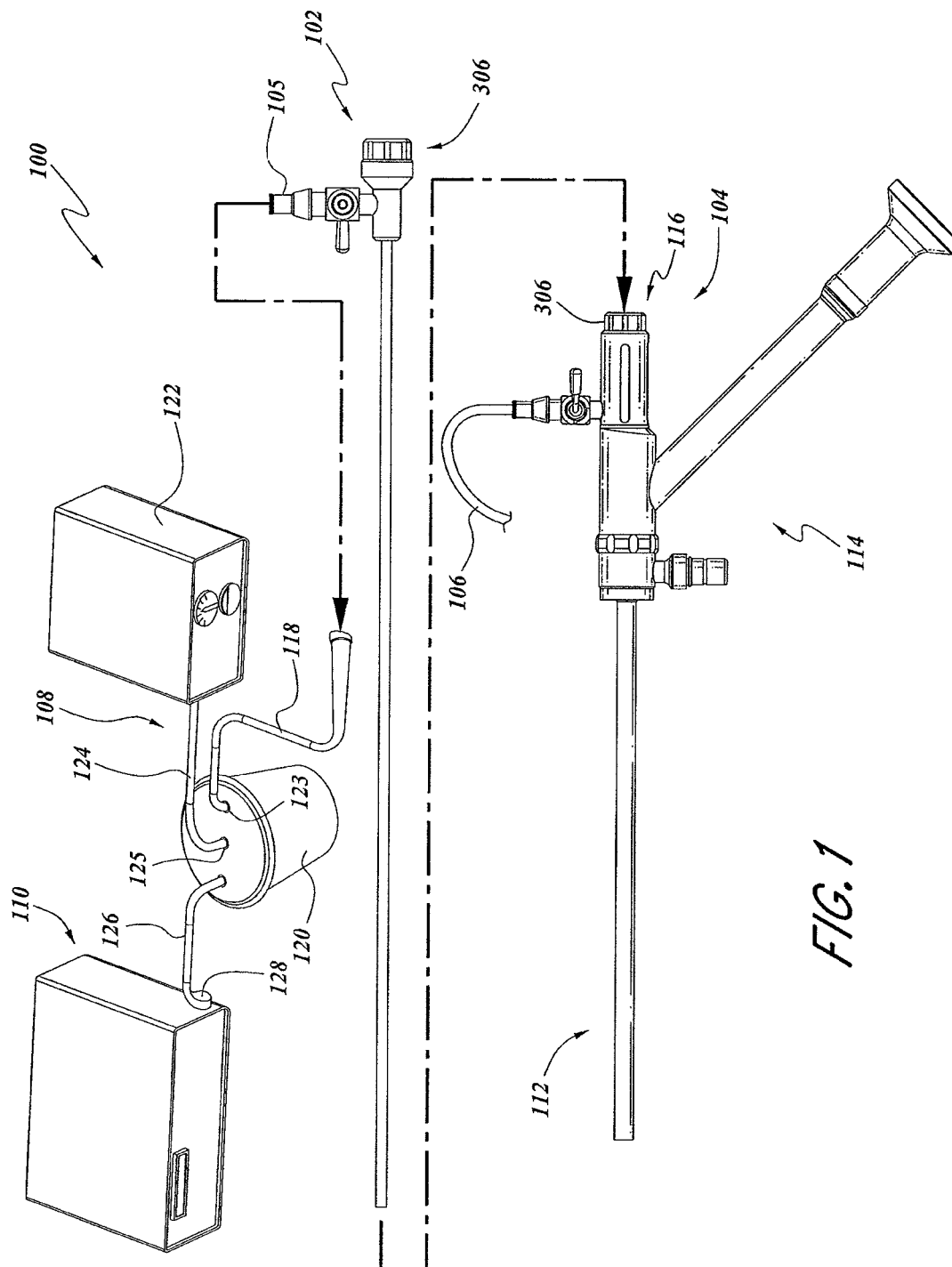
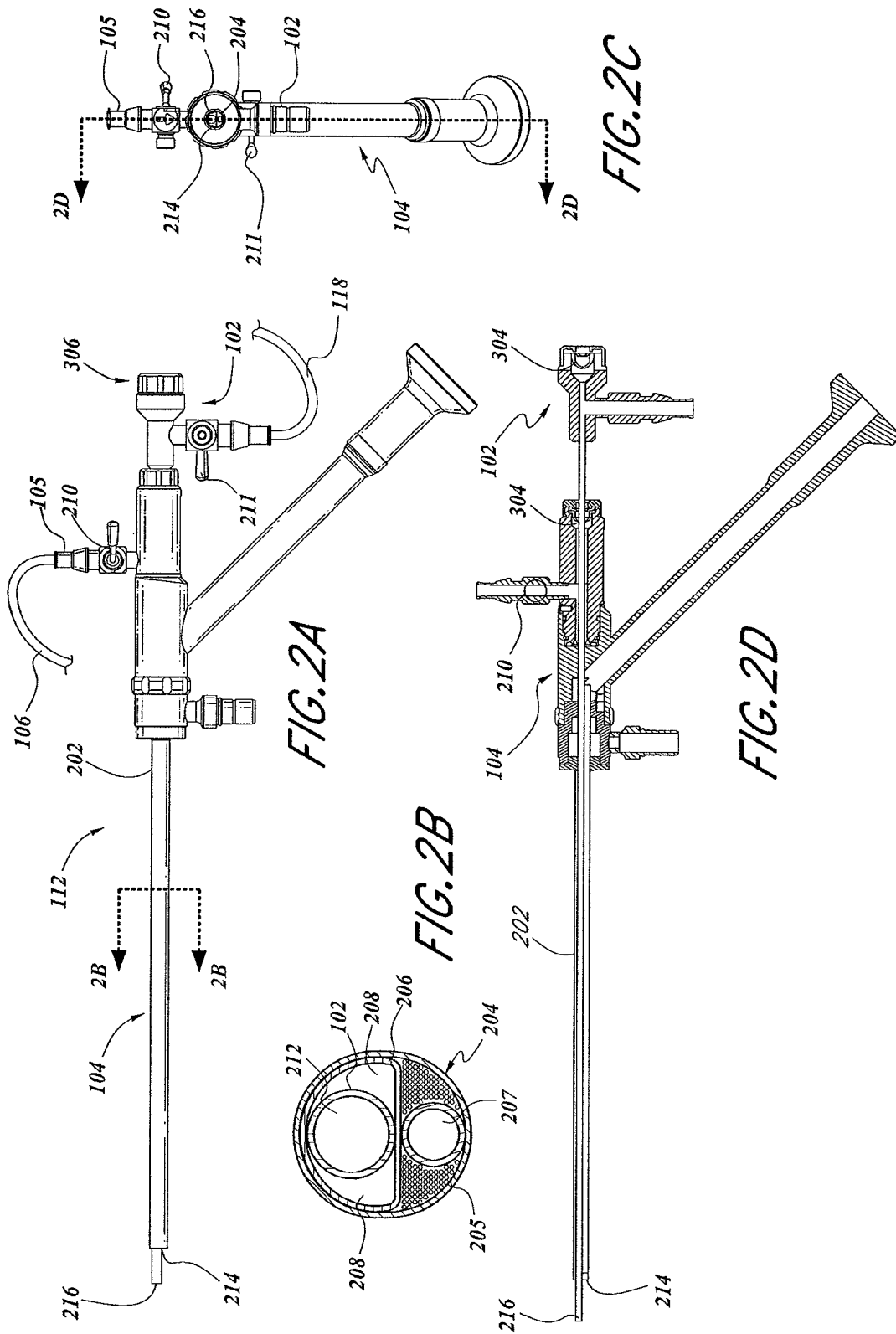
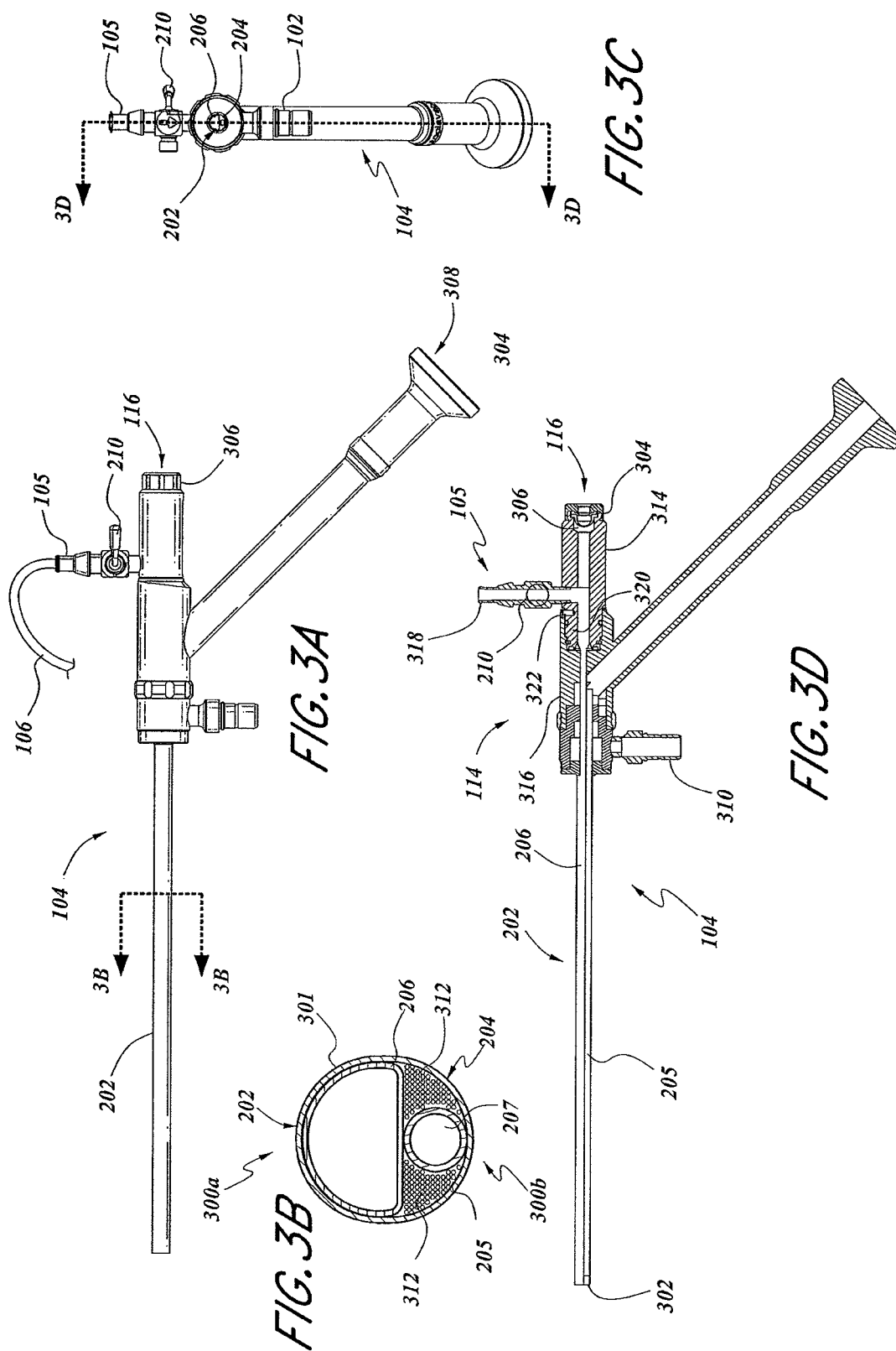
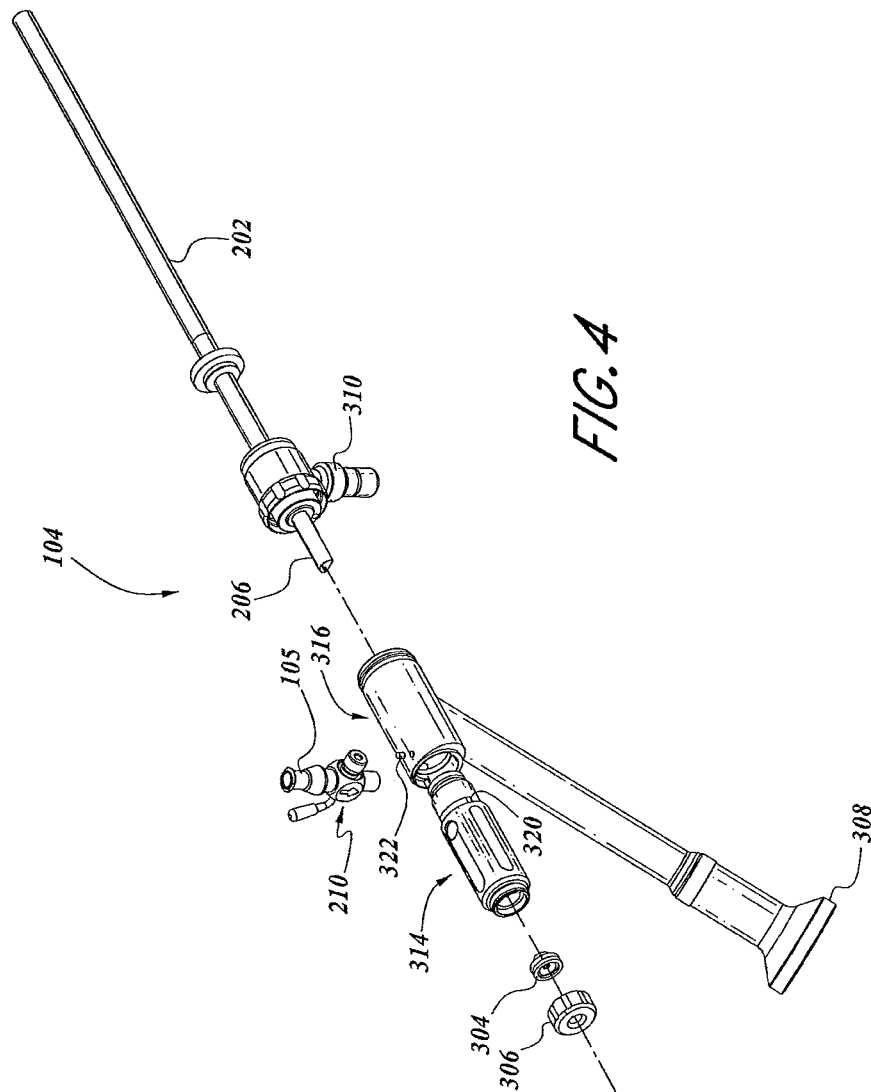
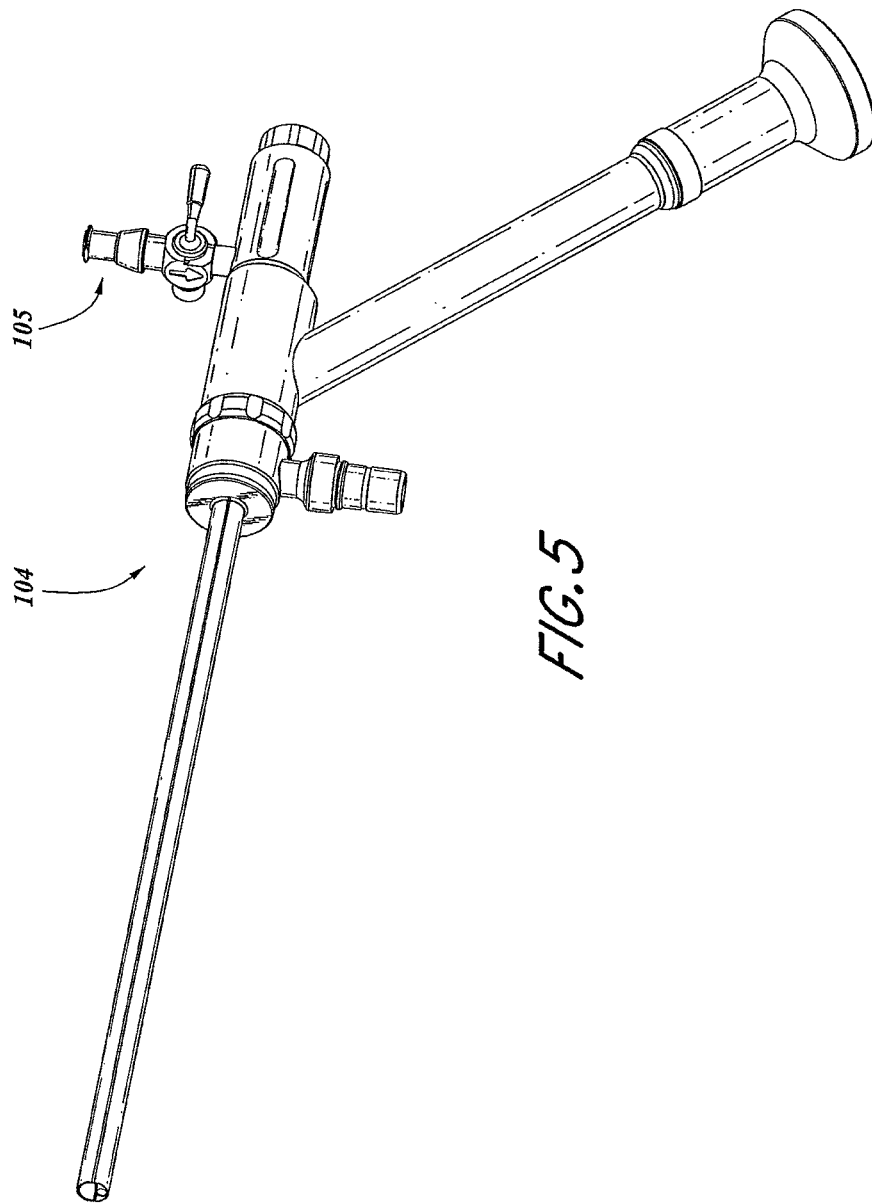


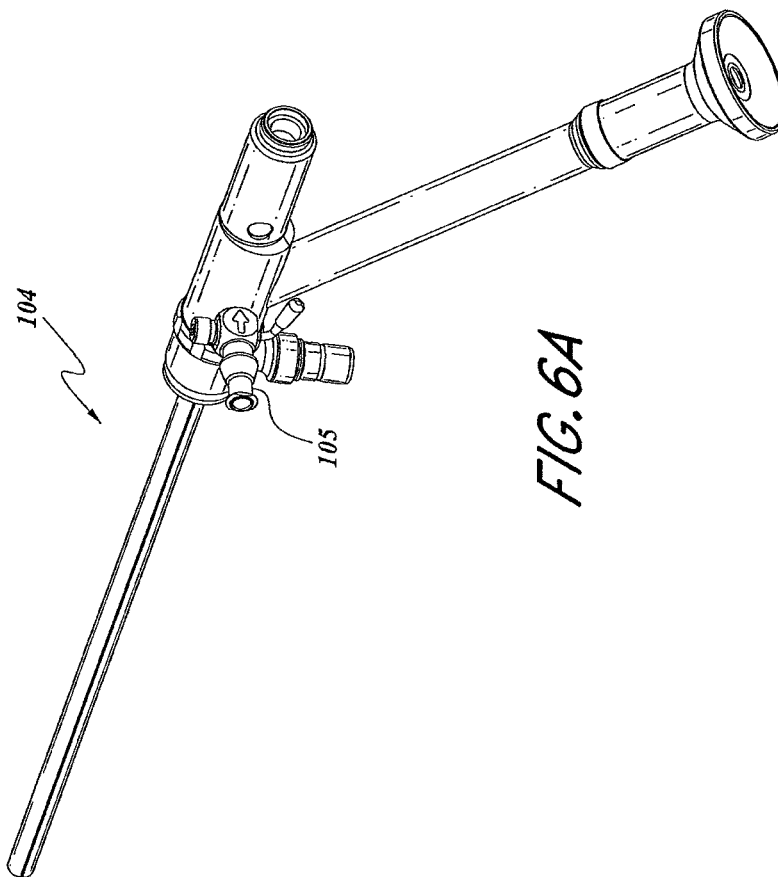
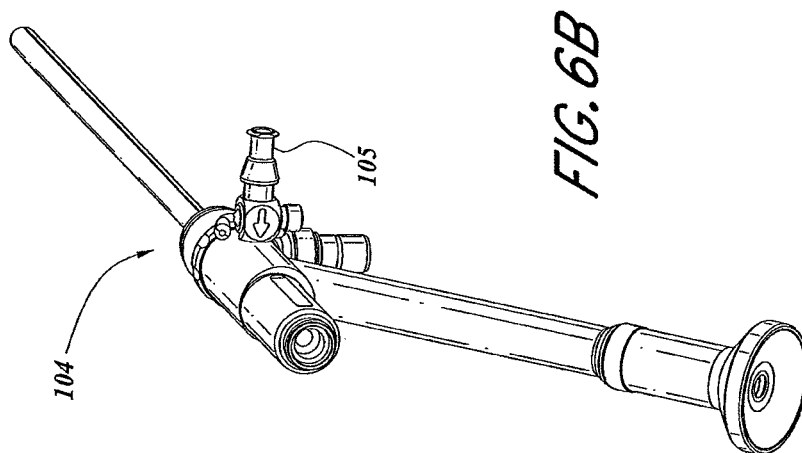
FIG. 1

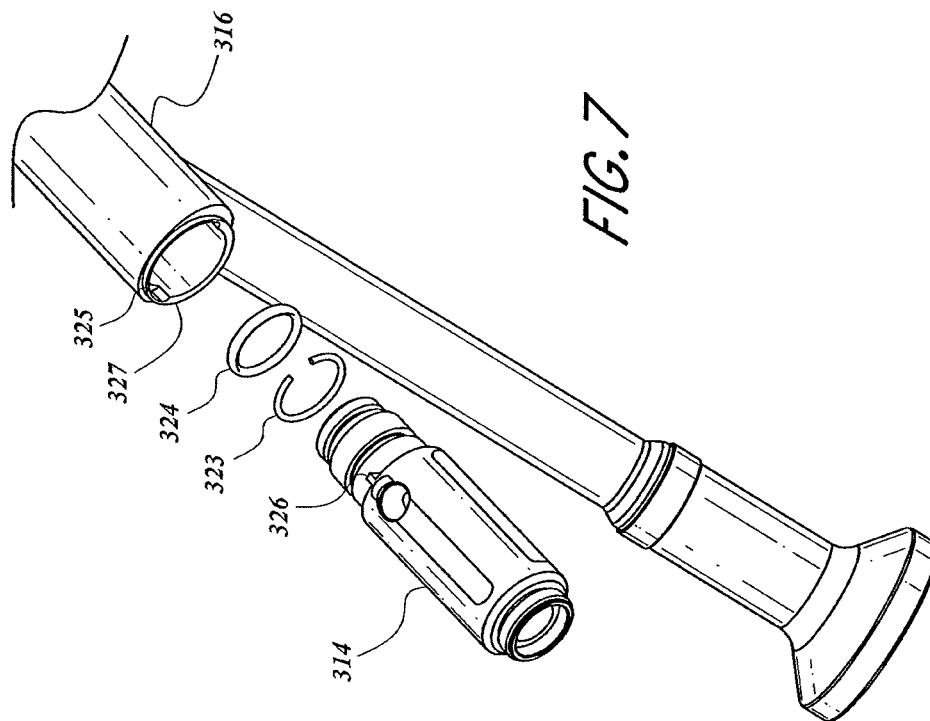


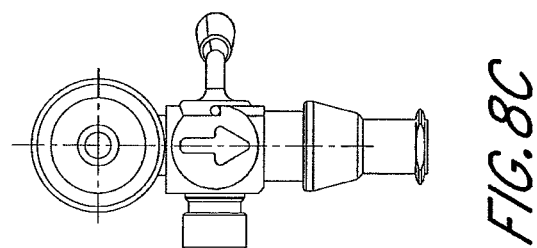
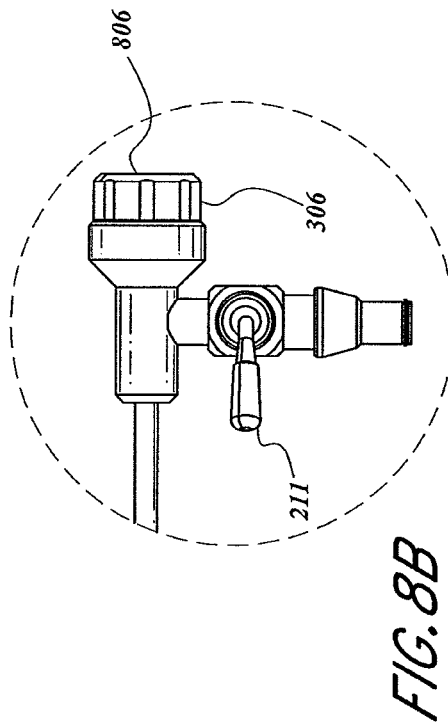
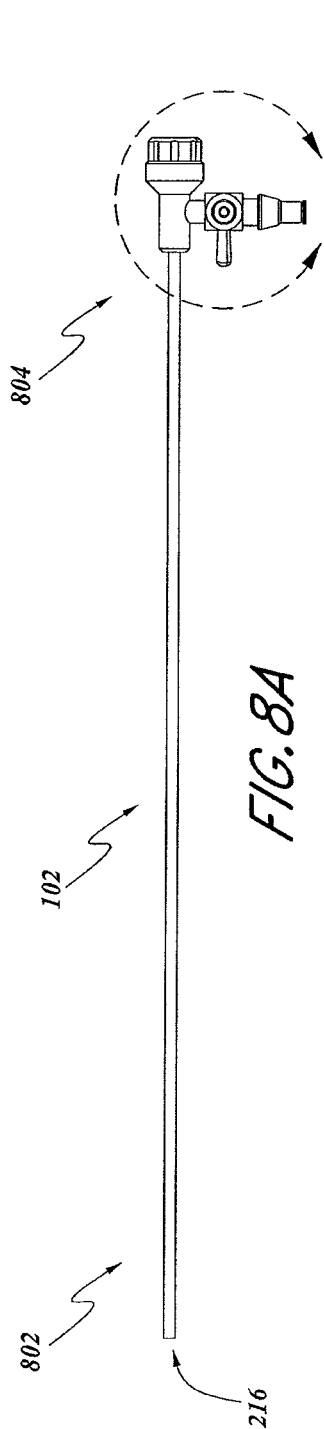


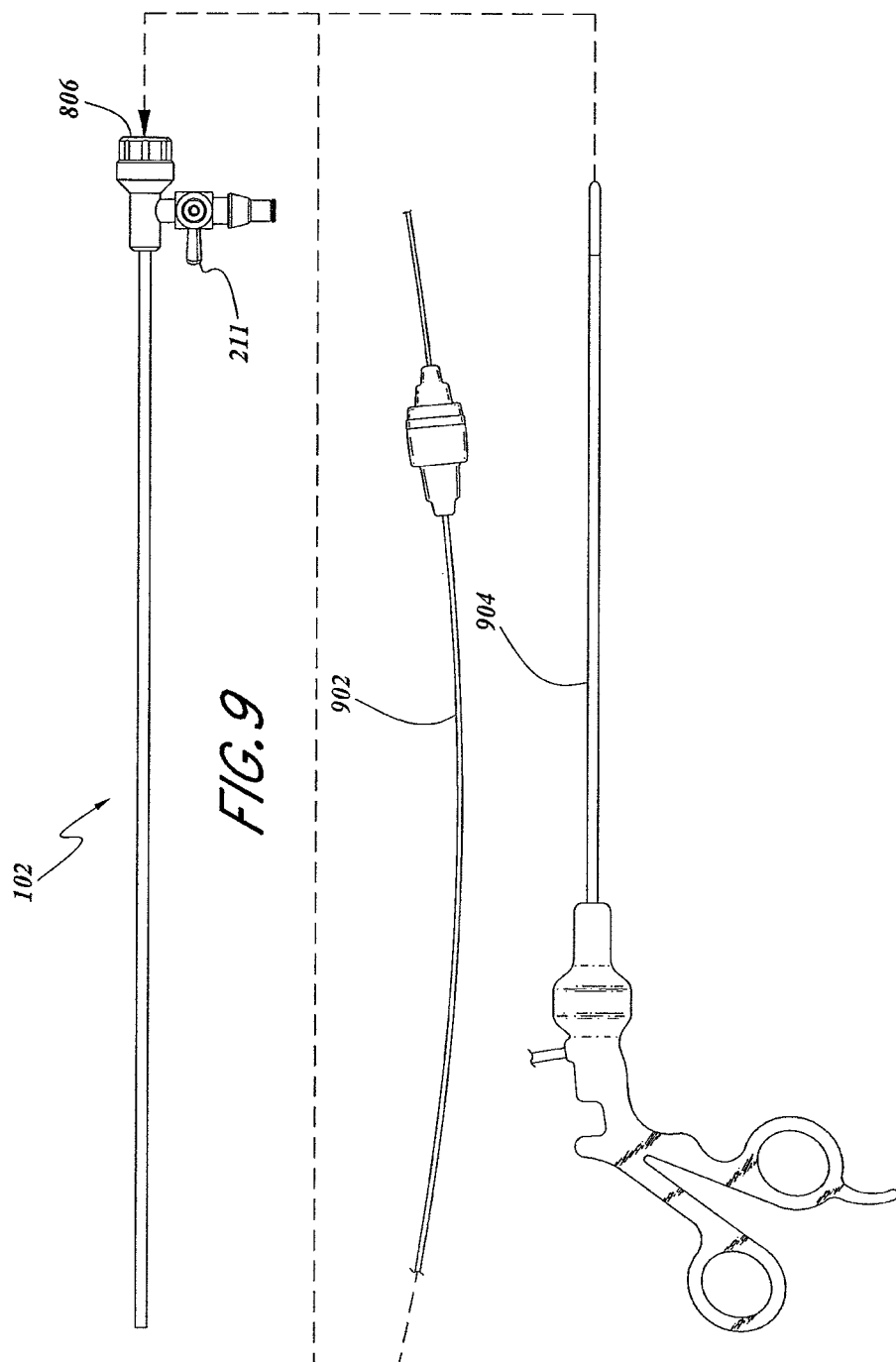












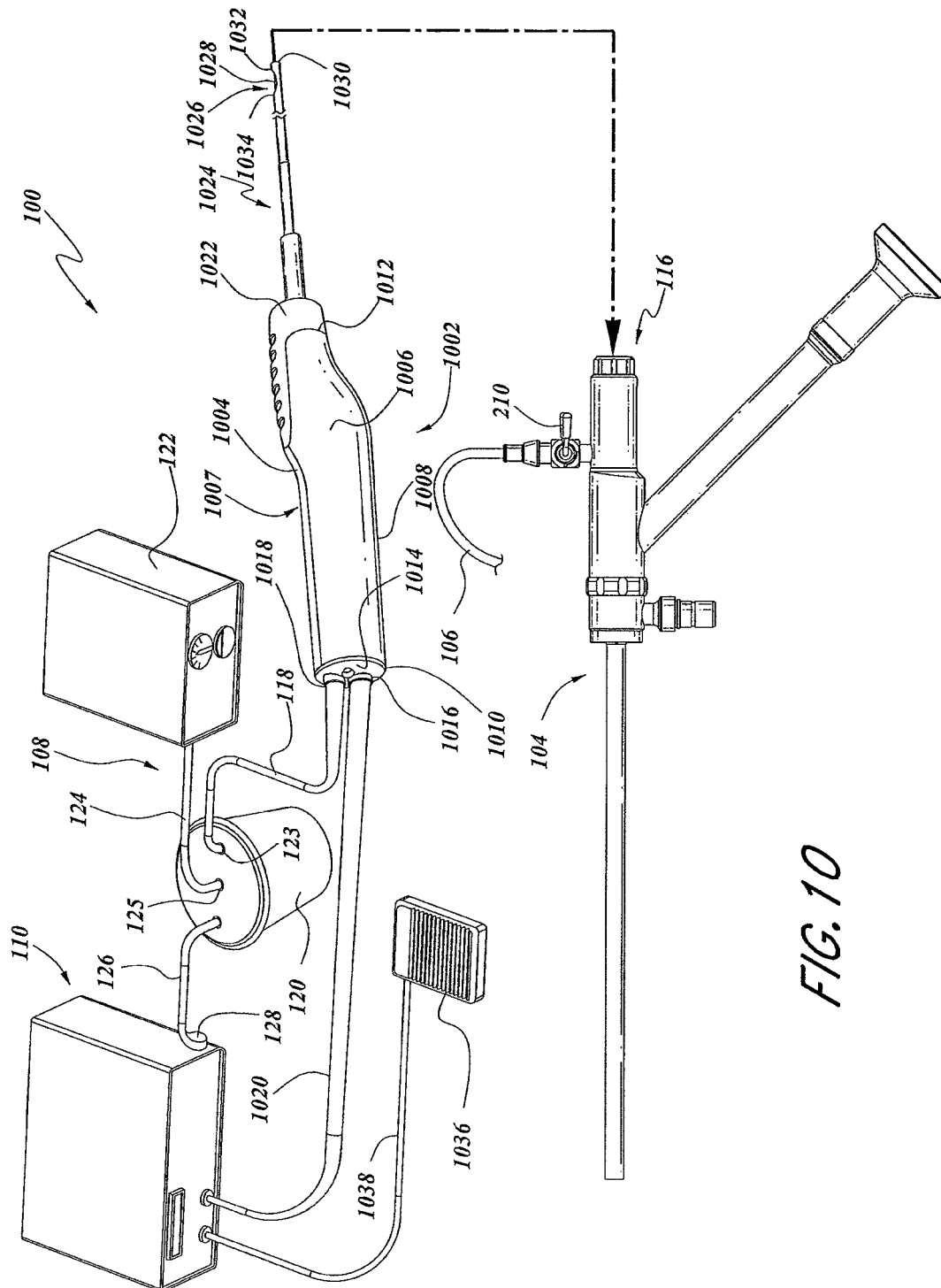
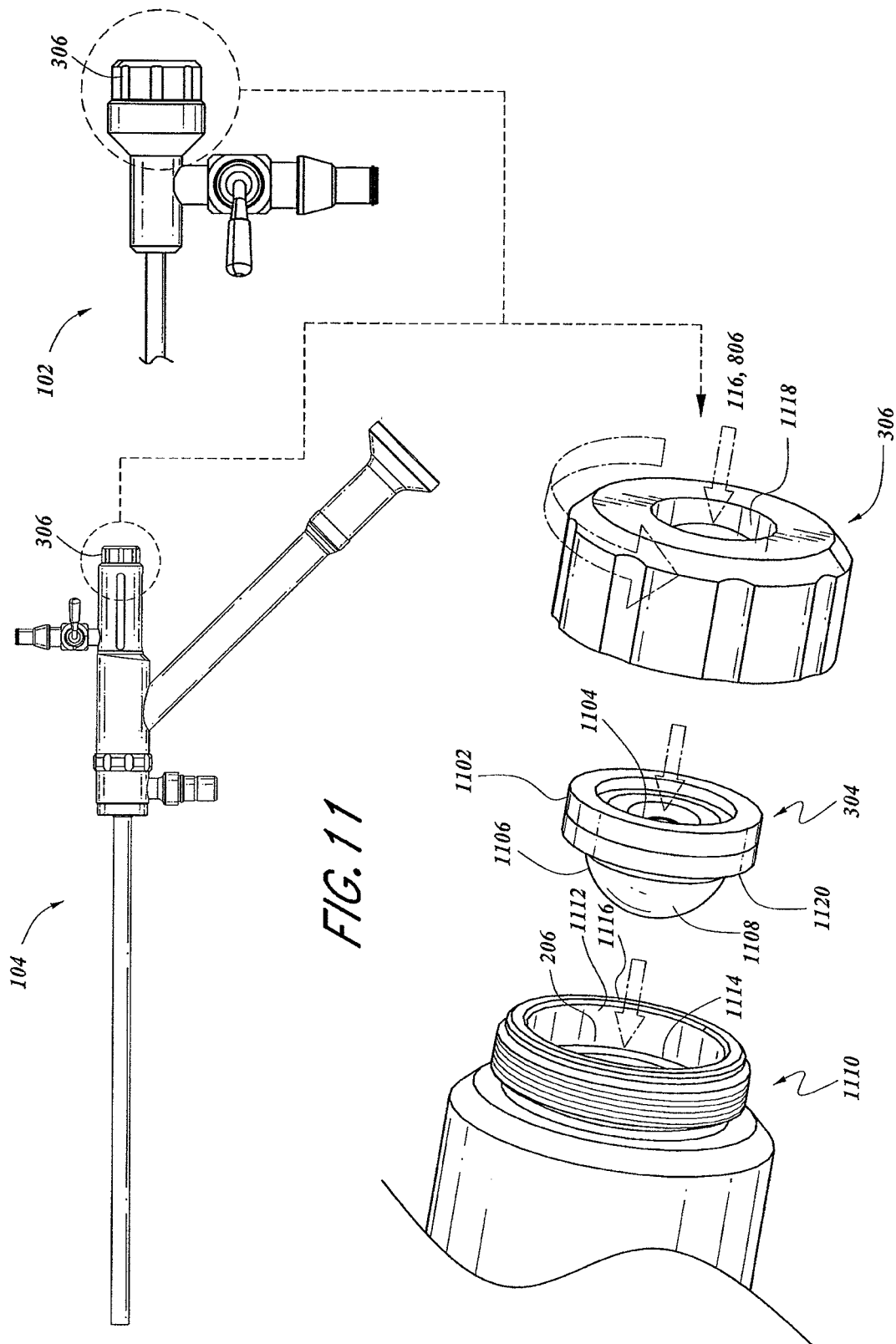
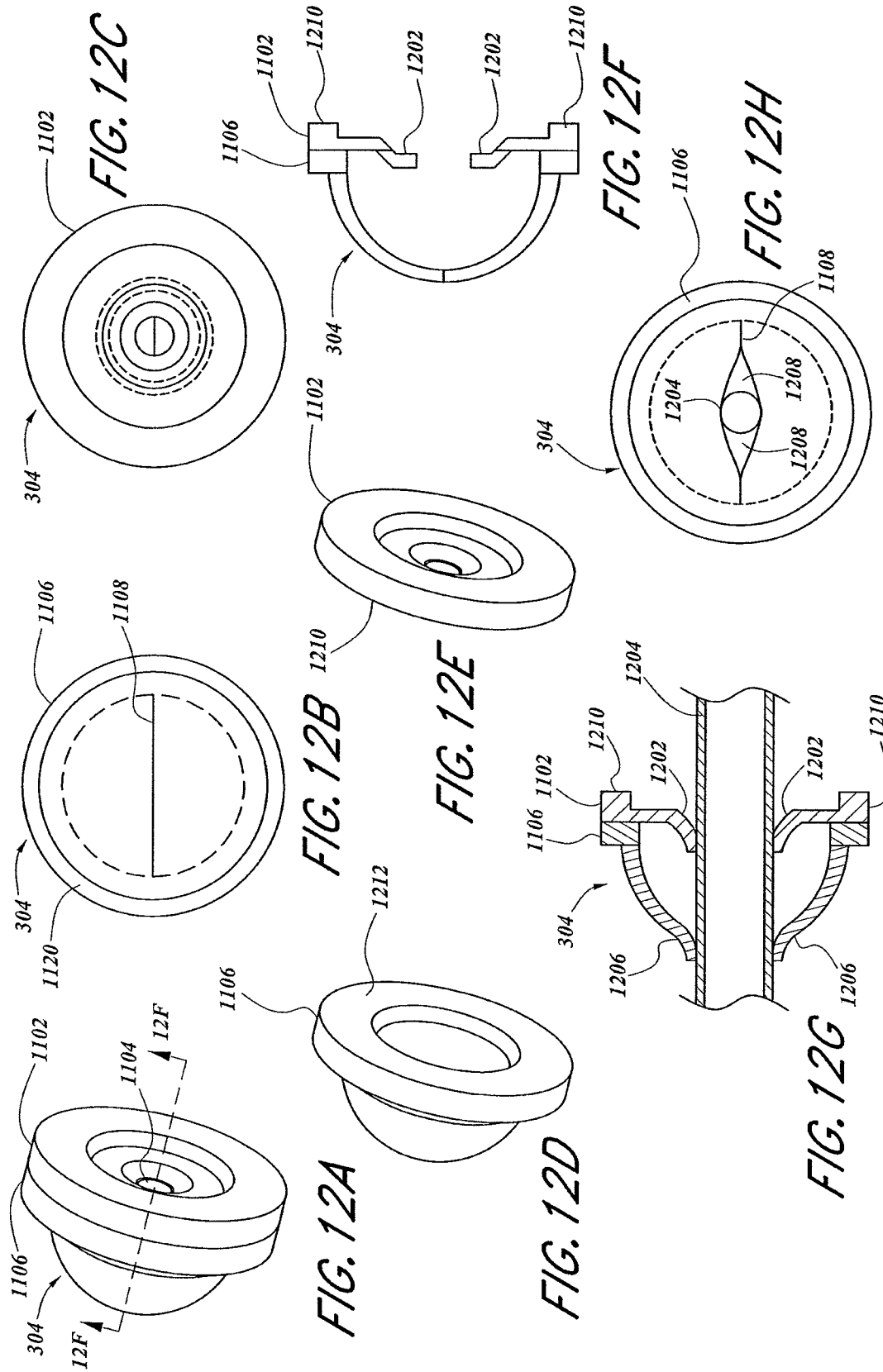


FIG. 10





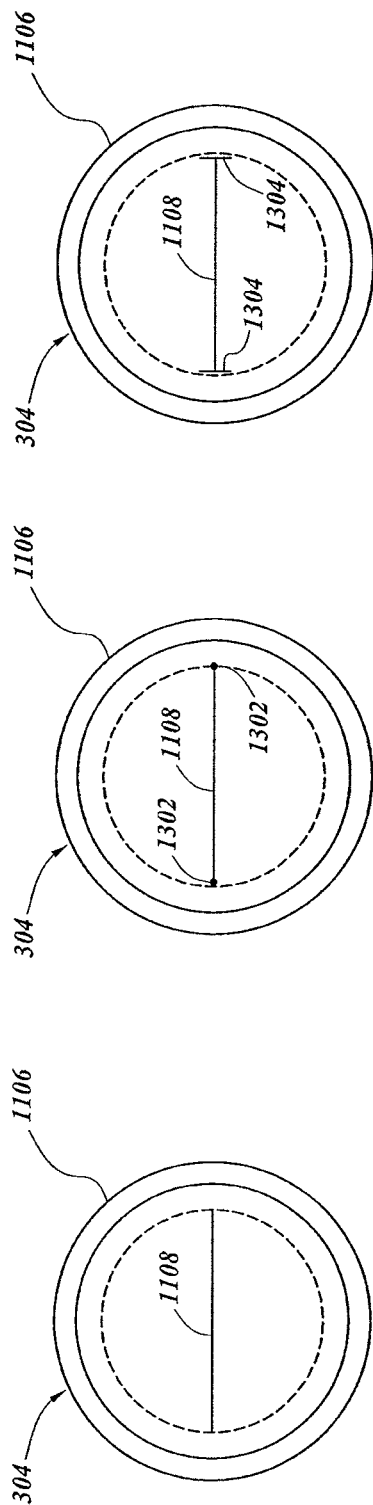


FIG. 13A

FIG. 13B

FIG. 13C

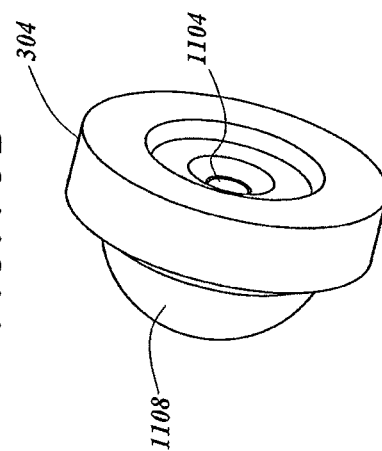


FIG. 13D

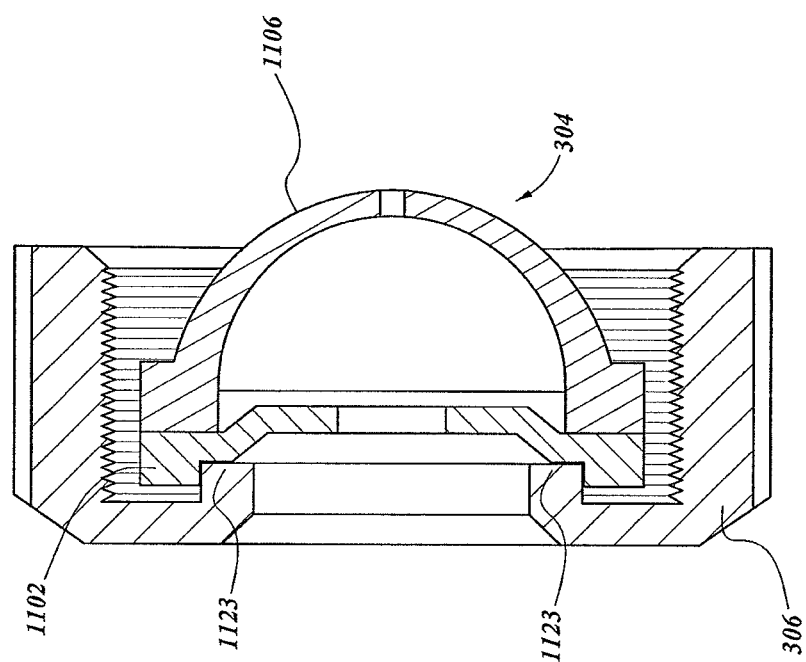


FIG. 14A

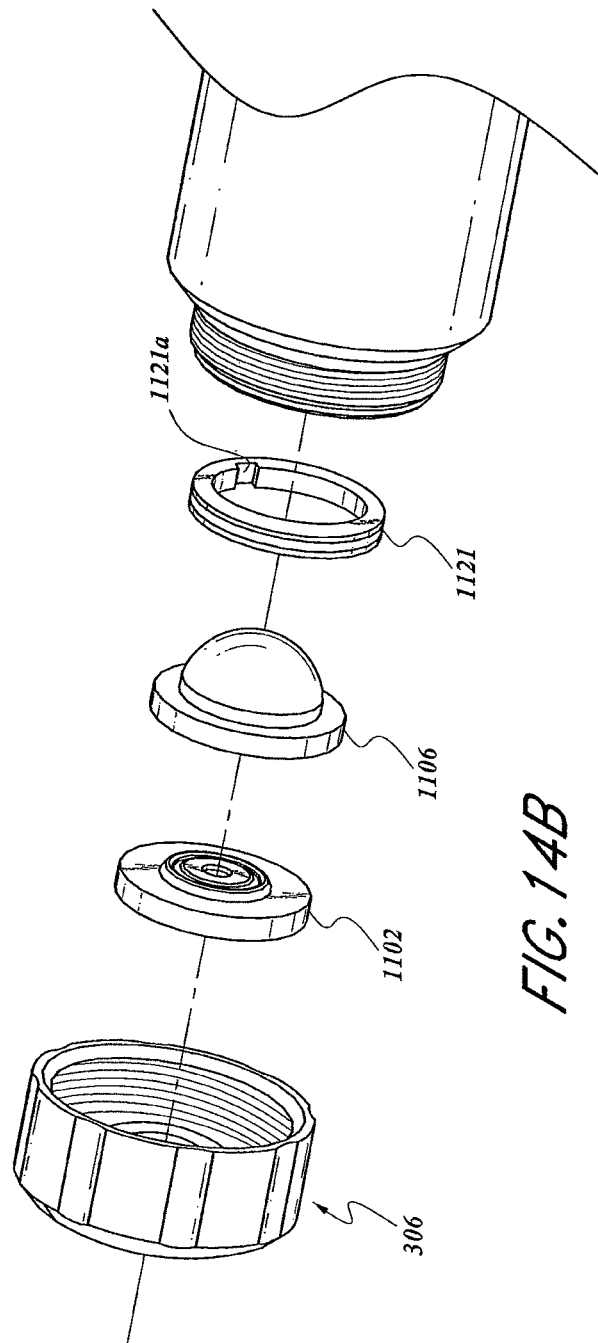
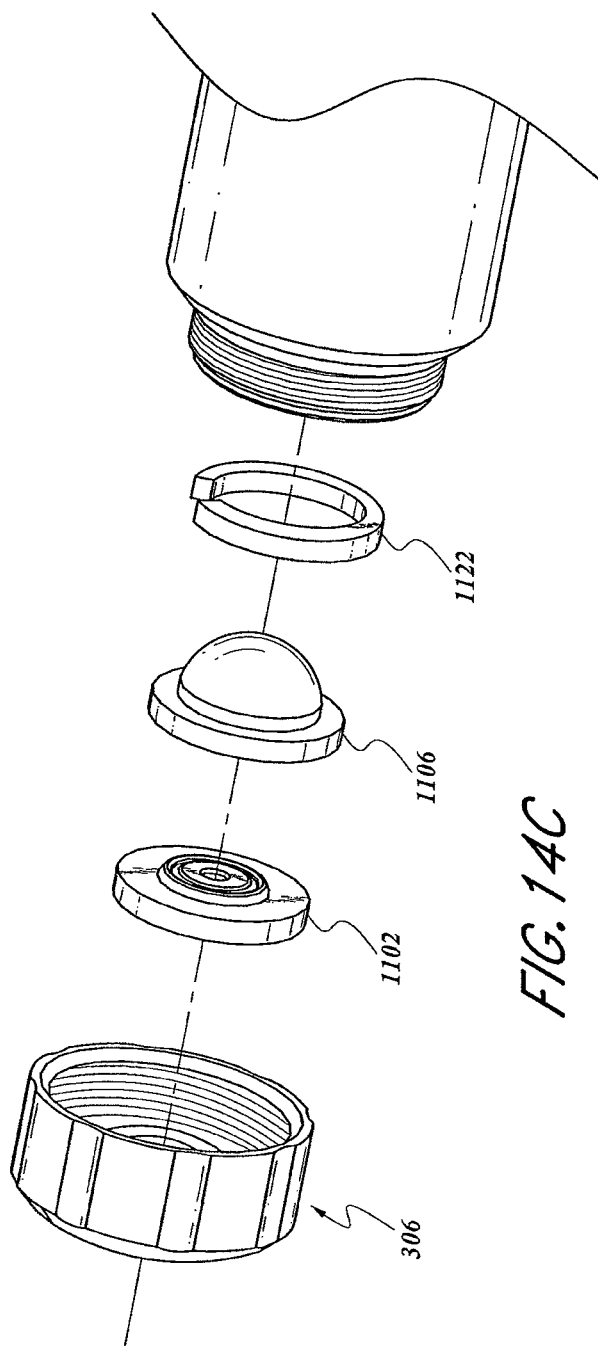


FIG. 14B



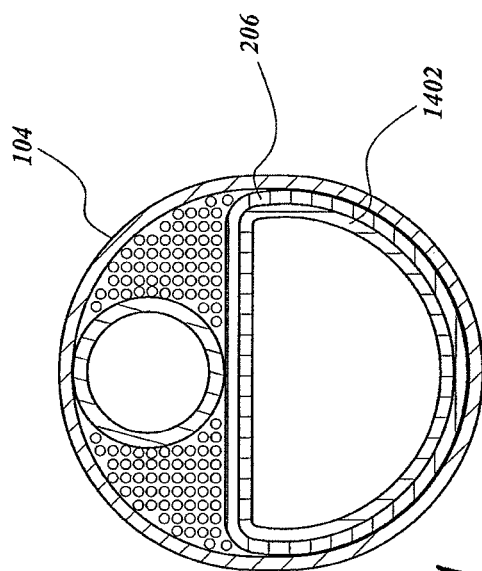


FIG. 15A

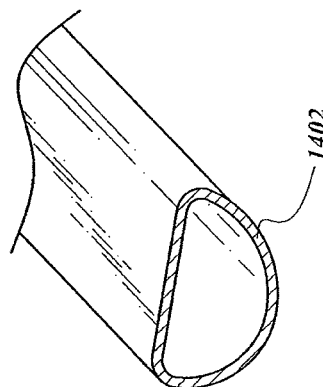


FIG. 15B

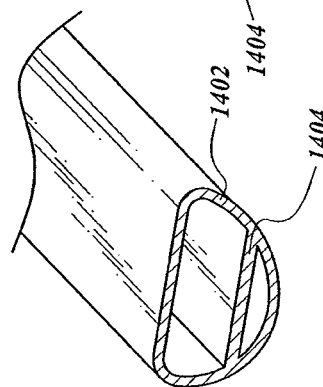


FIG. 15C

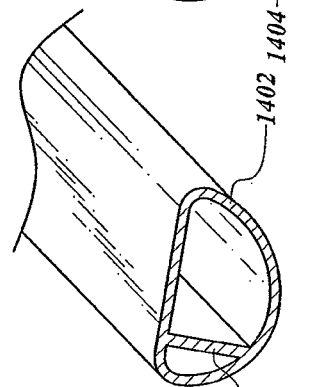


FIG. 15D

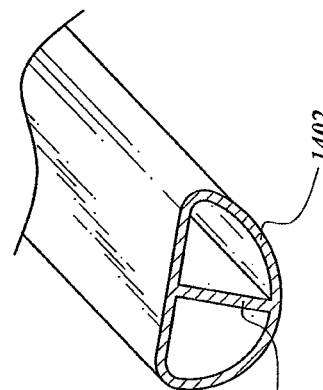


FIG. 15E

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ACCESS SYSTEM WITH REMOVABLE OUTFLOW CHANNEL

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 12/956,974, filed on Nov. 30, 2010 and titled ACCESS SYSTEM WITH REMOVABLE OUTFLOW CHANNEL, which is a continuation of PCT Application No. PCT/US2010/056416, filed on Nov. 11, 2010 and titled ACCESS SYSTEM WITH REMOVABLE OUTFLOW CHANNEL, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/261,289, titled ACCESS SYSTEM WITH REMOVABLE OUTFLOW CHANNEL and filed on Nov. 13, 2009. The foregoing applications are hereby incorporated by reference herein in their entirety as disclosed therein.

BACKGROUND

1. Field

The present inventions relate generally to methods, systems, and devices for surgical procedures, such as endoscopic surgical procedures.

2. Description of the Related Art

Surgeons typically use various devices for analyzing, diagnosing, and/or removing tissue from the body. In some circumstances, the subject tissue is easily accessible by surgeons and can be analyzed and/or removed without causing significant discomfort, injury, or trauma to the patient. In other instances, the subject tissue is difficult to access because, for example, of body orifice restrictions (e.g., diameter, rigidity, or the like).

Uterine fibroids and other abnormal gynecological tissues are examples of tissues that are difficult to access. It is believed that uterine fibroids occur in a substantial percentage of the female population, perhaps in at least 20 to 40 percent of all women. Generally, uterine fibroids can be well-defined, non-cancerous tumors that can be commonly found in the smooth muscle layer of the uterus. In many instances, uterine fibroids can grow to be several centimeters in diameter and may cause symptoms like menorrhagia (prolonged or heavy menstrual bleeding), pelvic pressure or pain, and reproductive dysfunction.

Difficulties in accessing the uterus have been the subject of various journal articles. For example, the Journal of Lower Genital Tract Disease, by the American Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology, published an article, titled, "Overcoming the Challenging Cervix Techniques to Access the Uterine Cavity." The article discusses various challenges for accessing the uterus and cites that: "One study reported that 47% of failed outpatient hysteroscopy procedures are because of cervical stenosis and undue pain during negotiation of the endocervical canal." Conventional devices, modalities, and treatments for accessing the uterus can cause much discomfort, injury and/or trauma to the patient.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other features, aspects and advantages of the embodiments of the inventions disclosed herein are described in detail below with reference to the drawings of various embodiments, which are intended to illustrate and not to limit the inventions. The drawings comprise the following figures in which:

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FIG. 1 is a partially exploded and schematic view of an embodiment of a surgical access system, including an access device and a removable outflow channel.

FIG. 2A is a side elevational view of the access device and the removable outflow channel devices illustrated in FIG. 1, wherein the outflow channel is positioned within the access device.

FIG. 2B is a cross-sectional view of the access device and the removable outflow channel devices illustrated in FIG. 2A, taken along line 2B-2B.

FIG. 2C is a distal elevational view of the access device and the removable outflow channel devices illustrated in FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2D is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the access device and the removable outflow channel devices illustrated in FIG. 2A.

FIG. 3A is a side elevated view of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3B is a cross-sectional view of a rod and/or shaft of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1, taken along line 3B-3B.

FIG. 3C is a distal view of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3D is a cross-sectional view of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is a proximal, top, side perspective and exploded view of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is bottom, distal, and side perspective view of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIGS. 6A-6B are proximal perspective views of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is a partially exploded perspective of an embodiment of the surgical access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 8A is a side elevational view of the removable outflow channel illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 8B is a close-up perspective view of the proximal end of the removable outflow channel illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 8C is a proximal elevational view of the removable outflow channel illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIG. 9 is a side elevational view of the removable outflow channel illustrated to receive various instruments.

FIG. 10 is a partially exploded perspective of an embodiment of the surgical access system comprising an access device and a tissue removal device.

FIG. 11 is a top, proximal, and side perspective and exploded view of the removable outflow channel illustrated in FIG. 1 having a seal apparatus.

FIG. 12A is a proximal, bottom, and side perspective view of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12B is a distal elevational view of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12C is a proximal elevational view of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12D is a proximal, bottom, and side perspective view of a dome-seal portion of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12E is a proximal, bottom, and side perspective view of a circular-seal portion of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12F is a cross-sectional view of the seal apparatus illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIG. 12G is a cross-sectional view of the seal apparatus having an instrument inserted through the seal apparatus.

FIG. 12H is a distal view of the seal apparatus having an instrument inserted through the seal apparatus.

FIGS. 13A-13C are distal views of various embodiments of the seal apparatus.

FIG. 13D is a proximal, bottom, and side perspective view of an embodiment of the seal apparatus.

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FIG. 14A is side perspective view of an embodiment of the seal apparatus for the access device.

FIGS. 14B-14C are partial exploded views of two embodiments of the seal apparatus for the access device.

FIG. 15A is a cross-sectional view of a rod and/or shaft of the access device illustrated in FIG. 1.

FIGS. 15B-15E are top, side perspective views of various embodiments of sheaths for insertion into the access device.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Although several embodiments, examples and illustrations are disclosed below, it will be understood by those of ordinary skill in the art that the invention described herein extends beyond the specifically disclosed embodiments, examples and illustrations and includes other uses of the invention and obvious modifications and equivalents thereof. Embodiments of the invention are described with reference to the accompanying figures, wherein like numerals refer to like elements throughout. The terminology used in the description presented herein is not intended to be interpreted in any limited or restrictive manner simply because it is being used in conjunction with a detailed description of some specific embodiments of the invention. In addition, embodiments of the invention can comprise several novel features and no single feature is solely responsible for its desirable attributes or is essential to practicing the inventions herein described.

The various embodiments of the present invention provide novel methods, systems and devices for tissue access, diagnosis, and/or removal. The methods, systems and devices are disclosed in the context of hysteroscopes and methods utilizing hysteroscopes because they have particular utility in this context. The inventions disclosed herein, however, can also be used in other contexts, such as, for example, but without limitation, inspection tools, tools for machining, devices including slidable fluid seals, as well as other contexts.

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a surgical access and tissue removal system 100. In this case, the access device has been selected to illustrate the principles of the embodiments; however, it will be understood that such principles apply equally to all types of surgical access devices, as well as to devices not necessarily limited to surgical access. Generally, the embodiments disclosed herein encompass devices comprising a working channel or other types of lumens where it is desirable to provide simultaneous inflow and outflow of fluid while receiving various surgical instruments through the working channel or lumen. Such devices can include, without limitation, hysteroscopes, endoscopes, catheters, cannulas, and the like. Thus, although the embodiments described with respect to an access device intended for gynecological procedures is illustrative only and not intended to be limiting in any respect.

In the case of gynecological procedures there is a particular need for a working channel having simultaneous inflow and outflow of fluid while allowing for various surgical instruments to be inserted and retracted through the working channel. This configuration allows the access device to have a small cross-sectional profile and/or a slim profile, which can minimize discomfort, trauma, and/or injury to the patient during a gynecological procedure. For example, if the access device is entering the cervix, then an access device having a smaller cross-sectional profile will cause less pain to the patient as the access device is inserted into the cervix. A smaller profile will likely require little to no cervical dilation. By combining the working channel with the inflow and outflow channels, as opposed to having separate and/or distinct

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channels for each, the profile or the cross-sectional area or diameter of the access device can be reduced.

Additionally, a smaller profile can also allow surgeons to make smaller incisions for the access device to enter, thereby allowing patients to suffer reduced trauma, and/or to experience minimized scarring, and/or to heal faster. Further, by consolidating the working channel with the inflow and outflow channels, additional space can be devoted to the working channel, thereby allowing the working channel to be sufficiently large to receive a wide variety of surgical instruments, for example, diagnostic instruments and/or tissue removal devices (for example, morcellators). Accordingly, surgeons need only insert a single access device into a patient as opposed to inserting a first access device for performing a diagnostic procedure, and then removing the first access device and inserting a second larger access device for performing a surgical procedure, for example, surgical removal of tissue.

With further reference to FIG. 1, the surgical access and tissue removal system 100, in the illustrated embodiment, can be considered a surgical access system 100 configured for gynecological procedures, such as hysteroscopy, cystoscopy, arthroscopy; however, a wide variety of procedures may be performed with the surgical access system 100. In addition to the performance of one or more gynecological procedures described in detail herein, the systems, methods, apparatuses, and devices disclosed herein can be used to perform one or more additional procedures (for example, urological procedures or the like), including but not limited to access and tissue manipulation and/or tissue removal from any of a variety of organs and tissues, such as the bladder, breast, lung, stomach, bowel, esophagus, oral cavity, rectum, nasal sinus, Eustachian tubes, heart, gall bladder, spine, shoulder, knee, hip, brain, arteries, veins, and various ducts. Routes of access include but are not limited to trans-cervical; trans-vaginal-wall; trans-uterine; trans-vesicle; trans-urethral; and other routes.

The surgical access and tissue removal system 100 can comprise an access device 104 and a removable outflow channel 102. The surgical access system 100 can further comprise a fluid supply 106, and a vacuum assembly 108. In some embodiments, the surgical access system can comprise an electrical hardware assembly 110.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, the access device 104 can comprise a distal insertion portion 112, which is intended for insertion into the patient's body, and a proximal portion 114, which generally remains outside the patient's body. In this case, the access device 104 can be referred to as a hysteroscope, wherein access to the patient's body is achieved through the cervix; however, the access device 104 can be a wide variety of other instruments, for example, endoscopes, catheters, cannulas, and the like, and in other procedures, access may be gained through other natural openings or orifices in the body (for example, ears nose, mouth, via trans-rectal, urethral, vaginal approach, or the like), or through surgical incision, or the like. The details of the distal insertion portion 112 are described below in connection with FIGS. 2A-2C, while the details of the proximal portion 114 are described below in connection with FIG. 2D.

Above the access device 104 in FIG. 1, there is illustrated in exploded relationship to the access device 104, a removable outflow channel 102. The removable outflow channel 102 can be inserted into the access device 104 through a proximal entry opening or port 116. The insertion of the removable outflow channel 102 into the access device 104 is merely illustrative, and a wide variety of other instruments can be used in connection with the proximal entry port 116.

For example, a tissue manipulation and/or removal device, such as a tissue removal device **1002** as described below and illustrated in FIG. **10**, and as further described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/432,647, titled "ACCESS DEVICE WITH ENHANCED WORKING CHANNEL," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety, can also be used in connection with the proximal entry port **116**. The proximal entry port **116** can comprise a seal apparatus **304** (described below in connection with FIGS. **11-13D**). In some embodiments, the removable outflow flow channel **102** is inserted through the proximal entry port **116** and/or through the seal apparatus **304**, and into the lumen of the access device **104**.

Above the outflow channel **102** in FIG. **1**, there is illustrated a vacuum assembly **108** and an electrical hardware assembly **110**. The vacuum assembly **108** can be connected to the removable outflow channel **102** through a outflow tube **118**. Outflow tube **118** can be connected to a specimen collection container **120**. A vacuum source **122** can be connected to specimen collection container **120** through a tube **124**. The electrical hardware assembly **110** may be connected to the specimen container **120** through a tube **126**. The electrical hardware assembly **110** may comprise a vacuum sensor **128** that can be coupled to the tube **126** for monitoring the pressure within container **120**.

Access Device and Removable Outflow Channel

FIGS. **2A-2D** illustrate the access device **104** inserted with the removable outflow channel **102**. This combination can be used for diagnostic use; however, this combination can be utilized for other uses.

The hysteroscope **104** can comprise a distal portion **112** having a straight rigid rod and/or shaft **202** for insertion into the patient's vaginal opening and through the cervix to access the uterine cavity; however, in some embodiments, the distal portion **112** is flexible and/or semi-flexible. A cross-sectional view of the rigid rod and/or shaft **202** is illustrated in FIG. **2B**. In some embodiments, the rigid rod and/or shaft **202** comprises an optical system and/or visualization element **207** and a working channel **206**. The working channel **206** is configured to receive the removable outflow channel **102**; however, a wide variety of surgical instruments may be inserted into the working channel **206**. In some embodiments, the working channel can be configured to have area of 14.1 mm sq. It should be noted that the ratio of the area of the instrument lumen **102** to working channel **206** can exceed 50% (e.g. 53.5%) illustrating the challenge of balancing the inflow area **208** and the outflow area **212** when optimizing the overall system performance.

The area within the working channel and surrounding the removable outflow channel **102** can also act as a fluid inflow conduit **208**, which is in fluid communication with fluid inlet port **105** that connects to the fluid supply **106** (for example, distension fluid). The fluid supply can comprise a peristaltic pump, a fluid-containing syringe, or other suitable fluid-dispensing device, with or without an automated mechanism from dispensing inflow fluid at a desired rate and/or pressure. In some embodiments, the fluid supply **106** can include a pressure sensor configured to detect a pressure of the fluid discharged from the pump or in the inflow conduit **208**. Such a pressure sensor can be used to limit the pressure of the fluid discharged from the pump and for estimating a pressure within a body cavity into which the shaft **202** is inserted.

A surgeon using the hysteroscope **104** for a surgical procedure can open, close, and/or limit the amount of fluid flowing into the fluid inflow conduit **208** and into the patient's body, here the uterine cavity, by adjusting the inflow fluid stopcock **210**. The area within the removable outflow channel acts as a fluid outflow conduit **212**, which is in fluid commu-

nication with the outflow tube **118**. The surgeon may open, close, and/or limit the amount of fluid flowing through the fluid outflow conduit **212** and out of the patient's body, here the uterine cavity, by adjusting the outflow fluid stopcock **211**. In operation, fluid from fluid supply **106** passes through inflow fluid stopcock **210** and flows through fluid inflow conduit **208** and out distal inflow fluid opening **214**. Fluid in the body, in this case the uterine cavity, enters distal outflow fluid opening **216** and flows through fluid outflow conduit **212** of the removable outflow channel **102**, and passes through outflow fluid stopcock **211**. While outflow fluid is flowing through the fluid outflow conduit **212**, a surgeon may insert and retract a wide variety of surgical instruments through the removable outflow channel **102**.

Alternatively, it is preferable in some situations to allow outflow tube **118** to be terminated into a drainage basin or drape wherein the inflow pressure drives the fluid outflow at a reduced rate.

Access Device

With reference to FIGS. **3A-3D**, the access device **104** can comprise a shaft **202**, and in some embodiments, the shaft **202** can be rigid, and can be constructed from a wide variety of materials. Such materials can include without limitation stainless steel (for example, SAE grade **316** or **304**), polymers, plastics, or the like. As illustrated in FIG. **3B**, the shaft **202** can comprise an outer portion **301** having an inner working channel **206** welded, bonded, or otherwise coupled to the outer portion **301**. In some embodiments, the outer portion **301** and the working channel **206** can be constructed from a die casting process using molds to shape the molten metal (or other material) into a desired configuration. In some embodiments, the outer portion **301** and the working channel **206** can be constructed from a single sheet of material (for example, a metal alloy such as stainless steel) that is formed to construct the working channel, and then rolled into a substantially circular shape to form the outer portion **301**, wherein the joints are welded together. In some embodiments, the shaft is flexible and/or semi-flexible, and can be constructed from a wide variety of materials including without limitation polymers, plastics, or the like. Depending on the materials used for construction, the access device **104** can be configured to be reusable (and sterilize-able), and/or disposable for one-time use. In some embodiments, parts and/or portions of the access device **104** are reusable while other parts and/or portions are disposable. For example, the shaft **202** and/or the access device body **316** can be reusable (and sterilize-able), while the light post **310** and/or the introduction section **314** and/or the seal apparatus **304** can be disposable for one time use.

The rod or shaft **202** of the access device of **104** can be dimensioned to enter a wide variety of natural body orifices and/or surgical sites and/or incisions. In the case of gynecological procedures wherein the rigid shaft **202** enters the cervix, the shaft **202** can have a diameter of 6.25 mm to minimize pain, discomfort, and/or injury to the patient while maximizing the cross-sectional area of the shaft **202**. A 6.25 mm diameter size will generally require local anesthesia because substantial dilation of the cervix may not be required; however, the access device can be configured with shafts **202** having other diameter sizes, for example, 2 mm, 3 mm, 4 mm, 5 mm, 6 mm, 7 mm, 8 mm, 9 mm, 10 mm, 11 mm, and 12 mm, and preferably between 5 mm-8 mm to minimize patient discomfort and/or injury while maximizing the cross-sectional area of the shaft.

In some embodiments, the cross-sectional shape of the shaft **202** is substantially oval and/or elliptical to provide the working channel a greater cross-sectional area and/or to allow

the shaft **202** to pass more easily through the body orifice and/or the surgical site/incision. As illustrated in FIG. 3B, the transverse diameter of the elliptically shaped shaft **202** extends between the top and bottom portions **300a**, **300b** of the shaft **202** to provide for a “taller” shaft profile. For example, the shaft **202** can be configured to be 6.4 mm tall and 6 mm wide. In some embodiments, the height to width ratio can be 1.07 to 1; however, other ratios are possible. In some embodiments, the transverse diameter extends between the sides of the shaft **202** to provide for a “wider” shaft profile. In some embodiments, the cross-sectional shape of the shaft **202** is substantially circular; however, a wide variety of other shapes are possible, for example, a rounded rectangular shape.

The access device **104** can comprise a working channel **206** and an optical system and/or a visualization element **207**, within an optical channel **205**, for inspecting and viewing the surgical site, in this case, a uterine cavity. In some embodiments, the working channel **206** and the optical channel **205** have substantially “D” shaped or semi-circle cross-sectional areas. To provide greater area for allowing surgical instruments, fluids, and the like to pass through the working channel, the cross-sectional area of the working channel can be greater than the optical channel by a ratio of 2:1, 1.5:1, 1.2:1 or by some other ratio. In some embodiments, the working channel **206** and the optical channel **205** have other cross-sectional area shapes and/or configurations. For example, the working channel and the optical channel can be combined into a single channel.

As further illustrated in FIGS. 3A-3D, the access device can act as a conduit for introducing a fluid and/or a distension media into the body through a fluid inlet port **105**, and the flow of fluid and/or distension media into the body can be controlled through inflow fluid stopcock **210**. The fluid inlet port and/or the inflow fluid stopcock **210** can be positioned perpendicular or substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the working channel **206**. The working channel **206** can be configured to extend the entire length of the access device **104** and comprise a distal exit port **302** that is axially positioned at the distal end of the access device **104**. The working channel **206** of the access device **104** can comprise a proximal entry port and/or opening **116** that is axially positioned at the proximal end of the access device **104**. The access device **104** can comprise a seal apparatus **304**, and a seal cap **306**. The seal apparatus **304** is coupled to the access device **104** with the seal cap **306** to prevent fluid from leaking or causing back-spray through the proximal entry port **116**. In some embodiments, a surgeon can unscrew the seal cap **306** and replace the seal apparatus with a new seal apparatus configured for a particular instrument to be inserted into the access device **104**. The seal apparatus is described below in connection with FIGS. 11-13D.

The access device **104** can comprise an optical system and/or visualization element **204**. The optical system **204** within optical channel **205** can comprise an eyepiece **308**, a prism (not shown), and a series of rod lenses **207** for visualizing the surgical site, in this case the uterine cavity. In some embodiments, the rod lens **207** has an outer diameter of 2.3 mm; however, in other embodiments, the rod lens **207** can have an outer diameter between 1-3 mm. The optical system **204** can comprise an illumination element for directing light into the surgical area. In some embodiments, a light source is coupled to the light post **310**, which is attached to a light delivery medium (for example, a bundle of fiber optics) **312** that traverse the length of the optical channel **205** within the shaft of the access device **104**. In some embodiments, the light source can be incorporated into the electrical hardware

assembly **110** or into a separate hardware component, wherein the light source is coupled to the light post **310** with fiber optics. In some embodiments, the light source is embedded within the light post **310**, which can be removable and/or disposable/reusable. In some embodiments, the light source within the light post **310** is powered by the electrical hardware assembly **110** or some other external power source, or the light source can be powered by a battery system within the light post **310** to reduce the number of cables, tubes, and/or wires connected to the access device, thereby providing the access device increased mobility in some embodiments. The light source can be any of a wide variety of light sources, including but not limited to LED's, halogen lamps, metal halide lamps, xenon arc lamps, or any other light source.

With reference to FIGS. 3D-6B, the proximal portion **114** of the access device **104** can comprise an introduction section **314** that is rotatably coupled to an access device body **316** to allow the inflow inlet port **105** to be swiveled and/or rotated 180 degrees about the longitudinal axis of the access device **104**. The ability to swivel and/or rotate the inlet portion **105** mitigates the risk of kinking in the inflow tube connecting the fluid supply **106** to the access device **104** through luer fitting **318**. In some embodiments, the distal end of the introduction section **314** and the proximal end of the access device body **316** are configured to be coupled and held together with sufficient force by a pin **322** engaging a slot **320** between the introduction section **314** and the access device body **316** while allowing the introduction section **314** to rotate relative to the access device body **316**. As illustrated in FIGS. 3D and 4, the access device body **316** comprises the pin **322**, the introduction section **314** comprises the rotation slot **320**. In some embodiments, the rotation of the introduction section **314** is accomplished by rotating the introduction section **314** relative to the access device body **316**, thereby causing the pin **322** to slide along the rotation slot **320**. With this configuration, the access device **104** can be configured to be sterilized using high heat or other sterilization means, thereby allowing the access device **104** to be reusable. In other embodiments, the seal between the introduction section **314** and the access device body is accomplished using rubber o-rings and/or other sealing mechanisms, both of which can be configured to be reusable and/or disposable. In some embodiments, the introduction section **314** is a disposable part or portion comprising a rubber o-ring and/or other sealing mechanism configured to form a seal between the introduction section **314** and the reusable access device body **316**.

As illustrated in FIGS. 5 and 6, the fluid inlet port **105** is positioned in an upward direction (for example, the 12 o'clock position) whereas in FIGS. 6A and 6B, the fluid inlet port **105** is positioned to the side of the access device **104** (for example, the 9 o'clock and 3 o'clock positions). In some embodiments, the fluid inlet port **105** can be rotated 180 degrees between the two side positions; however, in some embodiments, the fluid inlet port **105** can be rotated between the top and bottom positions. In some embodiments, the fluid inlet port **105** can be configured to rotate more than 180 degrees, for example, 360 degrees or substantially 360 degrees. The length of the rotation slot **320**, and the positioning of the rotation slot **320** on the introduction section **314** can determine the allowable degree of rotation and/or direction of rotation.

With reference to FIG. 7, an alternative embodiment for the mounting and rotation of the distal end of the introduction section **314** and the proximal end of the access device body **316** is shown. The mating parts can be configured to be coupled and held together with sufficient force by an internal retention ring **323** engaging a slot **325** between the introduc-

tion section **314** and the access device body **316** while allowing the introduction section **314** to rotate relative to the access device body **316**. Pin **326** can function as a stop to limit the rotation to 180°. For example, the device body **316** can include a contour **327** with terminal ends disposed 180° apart. The contour **327** can be adapted to receive the pin **326** between the terminal ends and thereby allow the pin **316** and the introduction section **314** rotate between the positions at which the pin **316** contacts the terminal ends of the contour **327**. Other configurations can also be used. O-ring **324**, or another type of seal, can be used to provide a fluid seal between the mating elements.

Removable Outflow Channel

With reference to FIGS. **8A-8C**, there is illustrated an embodiment of the removable outflow channel **102**, which can be inserted into the access device **104**. The removable outflow channel **102** can comprise a distal end portion **802** and a proximal end portion **804**. The distal end portion **802** can be configured for insertion into the proximal entry port **116** of the access device **104** and through the seal apparatus **304**. The distal end portion **802** can be configured to be advanced through the working channel **206** and passed through the distal inflow fluid opening **214** and into the body of the patient. In this case, the removable outflow channel **102** is inserted into a uterine cavity. The removable outflow channel **102** can be inserted through and/or positioned in the working channel **206** while inflow fluid flows in the working channel **206** and around the removable outflow channel **102**, and into the body.

The proximal end portion of the removable outflow channel **102** can comprise an outflow fluid stopcock **211**, a seal apparatus **304**, a seal retainer cap **306**, and a proximal entry port **806**. The outflow fluid stopcock **211** can be configured to control the flow of outflow fluid from the body. In some embodiments, the seal apparatus **304** and seal cap **306** can be configured to prevent or substantially prevent outflow fluid from back-spraying or leaking out of the proximal entry port **806** of the removable outflow channel **102**. In some embodiments, the length of removable outflow channel **102** between the distal outflow fluid opening **216** and the proximal edge of the seal cap **306** has been configured such that the distal outflow fluid opening **216** does not substantially extend beyond the distal inflow opening **214** to form a flush distal tip surface; however, in other embodiments, the length of the removable outflow channel **102** has been configured such that the distal outflow fluid opening **216** extends into the body and beyond the distal inflow opening **214**.

As illustrated in FIG. **9**, the proximal entry port **806** of the removable outflow channel **102** can be configured to receive a wide variety of handheld tools and/or instruments for various purposes, for example, diagnosis, biopsy, manipulation, or the like. Examples of the possible handheld tools include without limitation, bx forceps, scissors, dissectors, an electrocautery probe **902**, grasper **904**, and the like. To accommodate various instruments and/or to provide greater cross-sectional area, the removable outflow channel **102** can comprise various cross-sectional shapes, for example, circular, oval or elliptical, semi-circle-shaped, or any other shape. In some embodiments, the seal apparatus **304** within the removable outflow channel comprises an opening having a shape that conforms or substantially conforms to the shape of the instrument being inserted into the removable outflow channel. In some embodiments, the surgeon can unscrew the seal cap **306** and replace the seal apparatus with a new seal apparatus configured for a particular instrument to be inserted into the removable outflow channel.

Tissue Removal Device

With reference to FIG. **10**, the proximal entry port **116** of the access device **104** can be configured to receive a tissue removal device **1002** for removing tissue from the body, in this case fibroids and other abnormal tissue from the uterine cavity. In some embodiments, the tissue removal device **1002** comprises a lumen or tubular member **1024** for insertion into the working channel **206**, in substitution of the removable outflow channel **102**, wherein the lumen of the tissue removal device **1002** is connected to a vacuum source **120** for removing outflow fluid, tissue, and/or other matter from the body of the patient.

The tissue removal device **1002** can be of the type described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/432,647, titled "ACCESS DEVICE WITH ENHANCED WORKING CHANNEL," which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety. The tissue removal device **1002** can comprise complementary left and right housing halves **1004** and **1006**, respectively, each of which may be made of a rigid polymer or other suitable material. Halves **1004** and **1006** may be joined together, for example, with screws to form an elongated hollow housing **1007** comprising a rounded side wall **1008**, an open proximal end **1010**, and an open distal end **1012**. Housing **1007** may be bent or otherwise ergonomically shaped to fit comfortably in the hand of a user. A proximal cap **1014** may be mounted in proximal end **1010**. The proximal cap **1014** can be configured to comprise a pair of openings or lumens **1016** and **1018**. Opening or lumen **1016** can be configured to receive, for example, an external drive shaft, within protective sheath **1020**, that is mechanically coupled to a motor within electrical hardware assembly **110**. Opening or lumen **1018** can be configured to receive, for example, a outflow tube **118**. A distal cap **1022** may be mounted in distal end **1012**. The distal cap **1022** can be configured shaped to comprise an opening or lumen, which may be used to receive a shaft or tubular member **1024**.

The tubular member **1024** can be configured to be inserted into the working channel **206** of the access device **104** when the removable outflow channel **102** has been removed from the working channel **206**. With the tubular member **1024** inserted into the working channel **206**, fluid from the fluid supply **106** can enter the body by flowing through inflow fluid stopcock **210** and into the working channel **206** and around the tubular member **1024**.

The tubular member **1024** can have an outer diameter of about 3.0 mm for insertion into the working channel **206** of the access device **104**. However, in some embodiments, the outer diameter of the tubular member **1024** can be 5.5 mm or less, or more preferably 4 mm or less, even more preferably 3 mm or less, and still even more preferably 2 mm or less. In some embodiments, the tubular member **1024** can comprise a circular cross-sectional shape; however, other cross-sectional shapes (for example, oval or elliptical) are possible to maximize fluid flow and/or tissue cutting and/or removal. With a smaller outer diameter, the tissue removal device **1002** can cause less patient discomfort, reduce the risk of injury to the patient, and/or obviate or reduce the need for anesthesia to be administered to the patient. However, if the tissue removal device **1002** is used in an operating room setting where general anesthesia is available, and/or if the working channel is configured to receive a tissue removal device with a larger diameter, the tubular member **1024** diameter can be increased to maximize tissue removal and/or fluid flow. In such a case, the tubular member **1024** can have a diameter generally less than about 12 mm, preferably less than about 11 mm, and for some applications less than 10 mm. Depending on the particular clinical application, the tubular member **1024** can be constructed to have an outer diameter of no more than about

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9 mm, in some applications less than about 8 mm, preferably less than 7 mm, and more preferably less than 6 mm where the outer diameter is desirably minimized.

In some embodiments, the tubular member **1024** can comprise an opening or resection window **1026** with a cutting mechanism **1028** moving rotationally and, at the same time, oscillating translationally relative to tubular member **1024**. In some embodiments, the tubular member **1024** is connected to the outflow tube **118** through lumen **1018**.

When a vacuum is applied to tubular member **1024**, the resection window **1026** can be configured to receive, capture, and/or draw in tissue, fluid, and/or other matter. In some embodiments, the window **1026** can be located proximate to the distal end **1030** of the tubular member, such as, for example, 3 mm from distal end **1030**. The resection window **1026** can be shaped to comprise a distal end **1032** and a proximal end **1034**. The proximal end **1034** can slope gradually proximally, and the distal end **1032** can slope gradually distally. In some embodiments, the slopes of the proximal and distal ends **1032**, **1034** allow or encourage tissue to enter the resection window. In some embodiments, the slopes of the proximal and distal ends **1032**, **1034** form cutting edges for tissue resection. In some embodiments, the resection window **1026** can have a length of approximately 0.55 inches; however, other lengths are possible. The proximal end **1034** of the resection window **1016** can be a radial end having a radius of curvature of, for example, 0.085 inches; however, other radius curvatures are possible. The distal end **1032** of resection window **1016** may be a radial end having a radius of curvature of, for example, 0.150 inches; however, other radius curvatures are possible. In some embodiments, the resection window **1026** can extend over a substantial portion of the circumference of tubular member **1024**, such as, for example, about 60% of the circumference; however, other percentages are possible.

The vacuum assembly **108** can comprise a specimen collection/fluid container **120** and a vacuum source **122**. The distal end of a outflow tube **118** can be connected to the proximal end of vacuum tube **124**, and the proximal end of outflow tube **118** can be coupled to a first port **123** of container **120**. The distal end of a tube **124** can be coupled to a second port **125** of container **120**, and the proximal end of tube **124** can be coupled to the vacuum source **122**. In this manner, the vacuum source **122** can be used to apply suction to the tissue removal device **1002**, and any withdrawn tissue, fluids, or other matter suctioned through the resection window **1026** of the tissue removal device **1002** may be collected in container **120**.

The motor connected to the drive shaft within protective sheath **1020** can be coupled to a source of electricity, such as an AC wall outlet, using a power cord (not shown), and/or can be included within electrical hardware assembly **110**, in which there may be disposed other electronics (not shown). A foot pedal **1036** can be coupled to the motor by a cable **1038**, and the foot pedal **1036** can be used as a power switch to selectively activate or de-activate the motor. The proximal end of drive shaft can be mechanically coupled for rotation to the motor, and the distal end of drive shaft can be inserted through opening **1016** in the proximal cap **1014**, and coupled to the tissue removal device **1002** for tissue resection.

The electrical hardware assembly **110** can include a vacuum sensor **128**, which can be coupled to the container **120** by a tube **126**, so that the pressure within the container **120** may be monitored. In this manner, a sudden increase in vacuum pressure can indicate that a clog has occurred. The presence of a clog can be indicated via an alarm (not shown) located on or within the electrical hardware assembly **110**.

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The detection of a clog can indicate that further operation of the tissue removal device **1002** can only aggravate the clogging situation and that a cessation of tissue removal may be necessary. In this case, the electrical hardware assembly **110** can be configured to turn off and/or deactivate the vacuum source **122** and/or the motor. Similarly, a decrease in vacuum pressure, sudden or otherwise, can indicate that the tissue removal device **1002** and/or the removable outflow channel has been removed from the working channel **206** of the access device **104**. With the tissue removal device **1002** and/or the removable outflow channel removed, the inflow fluid cannot be removed from the body. In this case, the electrical hardware assembly **110** can be configured to turn off and/or deactivate the fluid supply **106** and/or the vacuum device.

The electrical hardware assembly **110** can be configured to synchronize actuation of the motor with actuation of vacuum source **122**. In this manner, turning on the motor will turn on the vacuum source **122** at the same time. Correspondingly, vacuum source **122** may be deactivated whenever the motor is turned off or when the tissue removal device **1002** and/or the removable outflow channel **102** is removed from the access device **104**.

Seal Apparatus

With reference to FIGS. 11-12H, the access device **104** and the removable outflow channel **102** can both comprise a seal apparatus **304** as described above. The seal apparatus **304** can be configured to maintain intra-cavity pressure of the body (in this case, the uterine cavity) and/or the prevention of back-spray toward the surgeon, thereby protecting the surgeon from blood borne pathogens in the back-spray. The seal apparatus **304** can prevent or substantially prevent leakage of fluids (for example, distension media, blood, and other matter) in at least four different modes: 1) when no instrument **1204** is inserted through the seal apparatus of the access device **104**; 2) when the removable outflow channel **102** is inserted through the seal apparatus of the access device **104**, for example, for diagnostic uses; 3) when no instrument **1204** is inserted through the seal apparatus of the removable outflow channel **102**; and 4) when the tissue removal device is inserted through the seal apparatus of the access device **140**, for example, for therapeutic uses. In some embodiments, the seal apparatus within the removable outflow channel **102** and the access device **104** can be substantially the same; however, in some embodiments, the seal apparatus can differ in design, shape, configuration, and dimensions.

In this case where the seal apparatuses are substantially the same, both the removable outflow channel **102** and the access device **104** comprise a threaded connection **1110** located at the proximal end of the removable outflow channel **102** and the access device **104**. The seal apparatus **304** can be positioned within the lumen **1112** of the threaded connection **1110** and/or the rim, edge, or platform **1120** of seal apparatus **304** can be configured to rest against rim or edge or platform **1114**. In some embodiments, the seal apparatus **304** comprises a thickness such that a portion of the seal apparatus **304** protrudes from the lumen **1112**. When the seal cap **306** is screwed onto the threaded connection **1110**, the seal cap can be configured to compress the seal apparatus **304** thereby securing the seal apparatus and forming a seal between the threaded connection **1110** and the seal cap **306**. In some embodiments, the seal apparatus **304** comprises a thickness that allows the seal apparatus **304** to be flush against the proximal end **1116** of the threaded connection **1110**. In this embodiment, the seal cap **306** can comprise a protrusion portion **1118** configured to press against the seal apparatus **304** when the seal cap **306** is screwed onto the threaded

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connection 1110, thereby securing the seal apparatus and forming a seal between the threaded connection 1110 and the seal cap 306.

In some embodiments, the seal apparatus 304 comprises a circular seal portion 1102 having an opening 1104, and a dome-shaped or hemispherical seal portion 1106. The circular seal portion 1102 can be configured to seal around the outer perimeter of a shaft of an instrument 1204 inserted through the opening 1104 of the circular seal portion 1102. In some embodiments, the opening 1104 is circular and/or round in shape to form a seal around a shaft having a round cross-sectional area; however, a wide variety of shapes for opening 1104 are possible to correspond to the instruments 1204 being inserted through the circular seal portion 1102. For example, the opening 1104 can comprise a substantially oval-shaped configuration if the to be inserted instrument 1204 had a shaft having an oval cross-sectional shape.

The dome-shaped or hemispherical seal portion 1106 can comprise a slit 1108 within the dome portion of the hemispherical seal portion 1106. In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal 1106 can be configured to allow an instrument 1204 to pass through the slit 1108. As the instrument passes through the slit 1108, the dome portion splits apart to form bent portions 1206 that slide along the outer perimeter of the instrument 1204. When the insertion of an instrument causes the dome portion to split apart, gap areas 1208 can be created to allow fluid into the seal apparatus 304. Fluid is prevented or substantially prevented from exiting the seal apparatus 304 because the circular seal portion 1102 forms a seal with the outer perimeter of the instrument 1204.

In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 can be configured to seal the fluid within the working channel 206 when no instrument 1204 has been inserted through slit 1108. The dome-shaped seal portion 1106 comprises more than one slit, for example, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, or more slits. In some embodiments, the plurality of slits is configured in a star pattern; however, a wide variety of patterns are possible.

In some embodiments, the slit or plurality of slits 1108 is formed using a cutting edge that cuts through the dome portion from the concave side to create a bias in the slit, wherein the bias allows the slit to form a seal or a substantially tight seal when there is fluid pressure (from the working channel 206) on the convex side of the dome seal. In some embodiments, the slit 1108 can be formed with a cutting edge that cuts the dome portion from the convex side. In some embodiments, the cutting edge is a razor or knife or other cutter that cuts in a radial fashion that corresponds to the curvature of the dome. In some embodiments, a surface is placed on the convex side of the dome portion while the cutting edge cuts the dome-shaped seal 1106 from the concave side so as to prevent the dome portion from substantially stretching while the cutting edge forms the slit 1108. In some embodiments, the cutting edge uses laser technology, microwave technology, ultrasound technology, and/or other technology to form the slit 1108 within the dome-shaped seal 1106. In some embodiments, the length of the slit can be 1 mm, 2 mm, 3 mm, 4 mm, 5 mm, 6 mm, or any other suitable length to allow a desired instrument 1204 to pass through the seal apparatus 304.

The seal apparatus 304 can be manufactured from a variety of elastic materials with high elongation capacity, for example, silicone, EDPM rubber, polyurethane or fluoroelastomers (Viton®), or the like. In some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 and the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 are manufactured from the same material having the same elasticity and/or elongation capacity; however, in some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 and the dome-

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shaped seal portion 1106 can be manufactured from different materials having different elasticity and/or elongation capacity. In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 is manufactured from a material having a more durable characteristic to allow the dome portion to withstand the fluid pressure from the working channel 206 and to form a seal. In some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 is manufactured from a material having a highly elastic characteristics and/or elongation capacity to allow instruments 1204 to pass through the opening 1104 and to form a seal around the outer surface of the inserted instrument 1204. In some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 and/or the dome-shaped seal portion comprise reinforcement material in all or parts of the circular seal portion 1102 and/or the dome-shaped seal portion. The reinforcement material can comprise without limitation metals, polymers, or other suitable materials, and/or the reinforcement material can take the form of filaments, scaffolding, meshes, membranes, or the like.

In some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 and the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 can have uniform thickness; however, in some embodiments, different parts of the circular seal portion 1102 and/or the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 have different thicknesses. For example, the circular seal portion 1102 can comprise a seal face section 1202 having a thickness of about 0.010 to 0.020 inches thick to permit the material to elongate without tearing when an instrument 1204 passes through the opening 1104. In some embodiments, the circular seal portion 1102 can comprise a flat section 1210 having a thickness of about 0.020 to 0.040 inches thick to allow for durability when compressed by the seal cap 306 and/or when integrated with and/or bonded with the dome-shaped seal portion 1106. In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 can comprise a thickness of about 0.010 to 0.020 inches thick to permit the material to elongate and slide open without tearing when an instrument 1204 passes through the slit 1108. In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 can comprise thicker regions in the base of the dome portion, while the areas closest to the slit are thinner. Thicker regions in the base provide for more stability for the dome portion while thinner regions around the slit area provide for more elasticity and/or elongation, allowing for easier passage of an instrument through the slit. In some embodiments, the dome-shaped seal portion 1106 can comprise a flat area 1212 to be integrated with and/or bonded with the circular seal portion 1102. The dome-shaped seal portion 1106 and the circular seal portion 1102 can be integrated and/or bonded together in a variety of ways, for example, adhesion, fusion, melting, or any other process.

With reference to FIGS. 13A-13C, there is illustrated a distal view of various embodiments of the seal apparatus 304. As illustrated in FIGS. 13B-13C, the slit 1108 can comprise stress relief areas to prevent the slit 1108 from tearing as an instrument 1204 passes through the slit 1108. In some embodiments, the stress relief area 1302 in FIG. 13B comprises a circular cut region to substantially prevent the slit 1108 from tearing. In some embodiments, the stress relief area 1304 in FIG. 13C comprises a transverse cut region to substantially prevent the slit 1108 from tearing. In some embodiments, the stress relief area can comprise other types of cut regions and/or can comprise thicker material and/or can comprise reinforcement materials to prevent tearing of the slit 1108.

With reference to FIG. 13D, there is illustrated an embodiment of the seal apparatus 304 as single monolithic part as opposed to an integrated part formed by a circular seal portion 1102 and a dome-shaped seal portion 1106. In some embodiments, the single monolithic part is formed by an injection

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mold process using silicone, EDPM rubber, polyurethane or fluoroelastomers (Viton®), or the like. In some embodiments, a single material is used to construct the monolithic part, and in other instances, two or more materials are used during the injection mold process to allow different portions of the monolithic part to comprise areas having different elasticity, elongation, durability, and the like. With the single monolithic part, a protector or trocar can be inserted into the opening **1104** to prevent the opening **1104** from being cut by the cutting edge used to form the slit **1108** on the concave surface of the dome portion of the seal apparatus **304**.

With reference to FIGS. **14A-14C**, further embodiments of the seal apparatus **304** and seal cap **306** are illustrated. FIG. **14A** illustrates the use of an adhesive **1123** to bond the seal apparatus **304** to the seal cap **306**. Bonding as such can provide further advantages, such as but without limitation, the entire assembly can now be offered as a single use component eliminating or reducing the need for handling the seal apparatus **304** prior to use. The seal cap **306** can be made from a low cost plastic material, stainless steel, or other materials. The seal apparatus **304** can be bonded with an inexpensive adhesive such as a cyanoacrylate, epoxy, silicone, or other adhesives.

FIG. **14B** illustrates another modification of the seal apparatus **304**, in which a mechanical locking ring **1121** can be threaded into the seal cap **306** to lock the seal apparatus **304** in place. With this configuration, the mating surface **1114** in the hysteroscope **104** or outflow channel **102** can be eliminated and the two seals **1102**, **1106** can be sufficiently compressed into a sealing engagement without an adhesive.

In some embodiments, the locking ring **1121** can optionally include an engagement portion **1121a** configured to allow a tool to be engaged with the locking ring **1121** and thus make assembly more convenient. In some embodiments, the engagement portion **1121a** can be in the form of a keyway or similar recess. A tool having a face complementary to an axial facing surface of the locking ring **1121** and the keyway can be used to tighten the locking ring **1121**. However, other configurations and tools can also be used.

In another modification of the seal apparatus **304**, illustrated in FIG. **14C**, which can be in the form of a single use seal apparatus, an internal retaining ring **1122** can be "snapped" into the seal cap **306** to lock the seal apparatus in place. For example, the internal retaining ring **1122** can be in the form of a split ring configured with a sufficient outward bias to secure itself within the seal **306**. With this configuration, the mating surface **1114** in the hysteroscope **104** or outflow channel **102** can be eliminated and the seals **1102**, **1106** can also be sufficiently compressed into a sealing engagement without an adhesive.

FIGS. **15A-15E** illustrate removable and/or disposable sheaths for inserting into the working channel **206** of the access device **104**. In FIG. **15A**, there is illustrated a sheath **1402** inserted within the working channel **206** of the access device **104** to prevent or substantially fluid, blood, and/or other materials from contacting the inner surface of the working channel **206**, thereby allowing the working channel **206** to require little to no sterilization after use. In some embodiments, the inner channel of the removable and/or disposable sheath is divided into one or more channels as illustrated in FIGS. **15C-15E**. In some embodiments, the one or more channels are formed by a wall. In some embodiments, the sheaths can be configured to be inserted into the working channel as well as around the outer surface of the access device **104** to prevent or substantially prevent the outer and/or inner surfaces of the access device **104** from contacting the body, fluids, and/or materials. The removable and/or disposable

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sheath can be manufactured from a wide variety of materials, including without limitation silicone, EDPM rubber, polyurethane or fluoroelastomers (Viton®), or the like.

Method of Use

The surgical access and removable system **100** can be used in a variety of different ways and in a variety of contexts. In some embodiments, a method for use comprises insertion of the access device within an orifice of the body or an incision in the body. In this case, the hysteroscope is inserted through the cervix and into the uterine cavity. The access device is connected to a fluid supply to introduce a distension media into the body. In this case, the distension media distends the uterine cavity to improve visualization the flaccid organ. In some embodiments, the fluid supply is configured to detect pressure within the body (for example, the uterine cavity) and to maintain a specific pressure.

To perform diagnostic procedures, the removable outflow channel is inserted through the proximal entry port of the access device. As the removable outflow channel is inserted through the seal apparatus, the removable outflow channel moves into a first position where the outer perimeter of the removable outflow channel forms a seal with the circular seal portion. As the removable outflow channel is advanced further into the seal apparatus, the removable outflow channel moves into a second position where the removable outflow channel passes through the slit of the dome portion of the seal apparatus and into the working channel of the access device. In moving the removable outflow channel into working channel, a fluid pathway is opened between the working channel and the seal apparatus; however, fluid is prevented from leaking out of the seal apparatus because of the seal made between the circular seal portion and the removable outflow channel. The removable flow channel is advanced to the distal end of the access device. The removable outflow channel is connected to a vacuum source, and fluid within the body starts to flow through the removable outflow channel while inflow fluid flows within the working channel and around the removable outflow channel and into the body. A light source is connected to the light post on the access device to deliver light into the body. The surgeon can visualize the uterine cavity through the eyepiece on the access device.

The surgeon can insert various instruments into the removable outflow channel. Insertion of instruments can be completed by inserting the instrument through the proximal entry port of the removable outflow channel. The proximal entry port also has a seal apparatus. As the instrument is inserted through the seal apparatus, the instrument moves into a first position where the outer perimeter of the instrument forms a seal with the circular seal portion. As the instrument is advanced further into the seal apparatus, the instrument moves into a second position where the instrument passes through the slit of the dome portion of the seal apparatus and into the removable outflow channel. In moving the instrument into the lumen of the removable outflow channel, a fluid pathway is opened between the removable outflow channel and the seal apparatus; however, fluid is prevented from leaking out of the seal apparatus because of the seal made between the circular seal portion and the instrument. The instrument is advanced to the distal end of the removable outflow channel and into the body.

The instrument may be retracted from the body. In retracting the instrument through the seal apparatus of the removable outflow channel, the instrument enters a first position where the instrument passes out of the dome-shaped seal portion to allow the dome-shaped seal portion to form a seal to close the fluid pathway between the removable outflow channel and the seal apparatus. As the instrument is further

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retracted, the instrument enters a second position where the instrument passes out of the circular seal portion. There is little or no back-splash because the fluid path between the removable outflow channel and the seal apparatus has been closed by the dome-shaped seal portion.

The removable outflow channel may also be retracted from the body and/or the access device. In retracting the removable outflow channel through the seal apparatus of the access device, the removable outflow channel enters a first position where the removable outflow channel passes out of the dome-shaped seal portion to allow the dome-shaped seal portion to form a seal to close the fluid pathway between the working channel and the seal apparatus. As the removable outflow channel is further retracted, the removable outflow channel enters a second position where the removable outflow channel passes out of the circular seal portion. There is little or no back-splash because the fluid path between the access device and the seal apparatus has been closed by the dome-shaped seal portion. In some embodiments, the fluid supply is configured to stop pumping fluid into the body when the removable outflow channel has been removed from the working channel because there is no mechanism for removing fluid from the body.

To remove tissue from the body, in this case the uterine body, the surgeon can insert a tissue removal device into the access device. As the tissue removal device is inserted through the proximal entry port of the access device, the tissue removal device enters the seal apparatus of the access device. In advancing the tissue removal device through the seal apparatus, the tissue removal device enters into a first position where the outer perimeter of the tissue removal device forms a seal with the circular seal portion. As the tissue removal device is advanced further into the seal apparatus, the tissue removal device moves into a second position where the tissue removal device passes through the slit of the dome portion of the seal apparatus and into the working channel of the access device. In moving the tissue removal device into working channel, a fluid pathway is opened between the working channel and the seal apparatus; however, fluid is prevented from leaking out of the seal apparatus because of the seal made between the circular seal portion and the tissue removal device. The tissue removal device is advanced to the distal end of the access device and into the body. The tissue removal device is connected to a vacuum source, and fluid within the body starts to flow through the tissue removal device while inflow fluid flows within the working channel and around the tissue removal device and into the body. The tissue removal device is connected to a drive shaft, which is drive by a motor. By activating the motor, the drive shaft drives the cutting device within the tissue removal device to cut tissue within the body, in this case the uterine cavity. By visualizing the target tissue through the eye, the surgeon can use the tissue removal device to perform tissue resection.

The tissue removal device may be retracted from the body. In retracting the tissue removal device through the seal apparatus of the access device, the tissue removal device enters a first position where the instrument passes out of the dome-shaped seal portion to allow the dome-shaped seal portion to form a seal to close the fluid pathway between the working channel and the seal apparatus. As the tissue removal device is further retracted, the tissue removal device enters a second position where the tissue removal device passes out of the circular seal portion. There is little or no back-splash because the fluid path between the working channel and the seal apparatus has been closed by the dome-shaped seal portion.

Conditional language, such as, among others, "can," "could," "might," or "may," unless specifically stated other-

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wise, or otherwise understood within the context as used, is generally intended to convey that some embodiments include, while other embodiments do not include, some features, elements and/or steps. Thus, such conditional language is not generally intended to imply that features, elements and/or steps are in any way required for one or more embodiments or that one or more embodiments necessarily include logic for deciding, with or without user input or prompting, whether these features, elements and/or steps are included or are to be performed in any particular embodiment.

Although this invention has been disclosed in the context of some preferred embodiments and examples, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the present invention extends beyond the specifically disclosed embodiments to other alternative embodiments and/or uses of the invention and obvious modifications and equivalents thereof. Additionally, the skilled artisan will recognize that any of the above-described methods can be carried out using any appropriate apparatus. Further, the disclosure herein of any particular feature, aspect, method, property, characteristic, quality, attribute, element, or the like in connection with an embodiment can be used in all other embodiments set forth herein. Thus, it is intended that the scope of the present invention herein disclosed should not be limited by the particular disclosed embodiments described above.

Although the embodiments of the inventions have been disclosed in the context of a some preferred embodiments and examples, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the present inventions extend beyond the specifically disclosed embodiments to other alternative embodiments and/or uses of the inventions and obvious modifications and equivalents thereof. In addition, while a number of variations of the inventions have been shown and described in detail, other modifications, which are within the scope of the inventions, will be readily apparent to those of skill in the art based upon this disclosure. It is also contemplated that various combinations or subcombinations of the specific features and aspects of the embodiments may be made and still fall within one or more of the inventions. Accordingly, it should be understood that various features and aspects of the disclosed embodiments can be combine with or substituted for one another in order to form varying modes of the disclosed inventions. For all of the embodiments described herein the steps of the methods need not be performed sequentially. Thus, it is intended that the scope of the present inventions herein disclosed should not be limited by the particular disclosed embodiments described above.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of accessing an internal site in a patient's uterus, comprising:

positioning a hysteroscope into an inserted position by inserting a distal end of the hysteroscope, from an outside of a body of a patient, through a cervix of the patient, into a position within the patient's uterus, the hysteroscope comprising a proximal end and an elongate body extending from the proximal end to the distal end, the elongate body having a working channel extending axially therethrough;

fluidly connecting the working channel to an inflow fluid source for introducing inflow fluid into the patient's uterus through the working channel;

inserting axially a removable outflow channel through the working channel, the removable outflow channel having a lumen extending between a distal end and a proximal end of the removable outflow channel, wherein the distal end of the removable outflow channel does not substantially extend beyond the distal end of the hysteroscope;

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fluidly connecting the removable outflow channel to a vacuum source for removing inflow fluid from the patient's uterus through the removable outflow channel; distending the patient's uterus by introducing inflow fluid into the working channel and into the uterus; removing the removable outflow channel from the working channel, while maintaining the hysteroscope in the inserted position such that the distal end of the hysteroscope remains within the patient's uterus, by proximally retracting the removable outflow channel to a first position to thereby close a seal device coupled to the proximal end of the hysteroscope, wherein the seal device prevents inflow fluid from exiting out of the proximal end of the hysteroscope; after removing the removable outflow channel from the working channel, advancing axially a surgical instrument through the working channel and into the patient's uterus, the surgical instrument comprising a tissue morcellator having an internal outflow channel; and fluidly connecting the internal outflow channel of the morcellator to a vacuum source for removing inflow fluid from the patient's uterus through the internal outflow channel.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein inserting axially the removable outflow channel through the working channel further comprises opening the seal device and generating a seal between an outer surface of the removable outflow channel and the hysteroscope.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the seal device comprises a first sealing element and a second sealing element, the first sealing element positioned distal relative to the second sealing element.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein retracting the removable outflow channel to the first position closes the first sealing element to prevent inflow fluid from exiting out of the proximal end of the hysteroscope, while the second sealing element maintains a seal around the removable outflow channel to prevent back splash as the first sealing element closes.

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5. The method of claim 1, further comprising advancing axially a surgical tool through the removable outflow channel and into the patient's uterus.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein fluidly connecting the working channel to an inflow fluid source creates an inflow fluid path.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein closing the seal device closes the inflow fluid path.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the seal device comprises a first sealing element and a second sealing element, the first sealing element positioned distal relative to the second sealing element, wherein the removing the removable outflow channel to the first position closes the inflow fluid path, and wherein further proximally retracting the removable outflow channel to a second position closes the second sealing element.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein at least one of the first or second sealing elements comprises a dome-shaped portion having at least one slit opening.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the dome-shaped portion comprises a concave side, the concave side positioned to face the proximal end of the hysteroscope.

11. The method of claim 9 additionally comprising forming the at least one slit opening in the dome-shaped portion by cutting from the concave side.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the removable outflow channel is configured so that the distal end of removable outflow channel cannot extend substantially beyond the distal end of the hysteroscope.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the distal end of the removable outflow channel and the distal end of the hysteroscope are configured such that the respective distal ends form a flush distal tip surface.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the removable outflow channel has an inner surface and an outer surface, and wherein the outer surface defines part of an inflow channel for introducing inflow fluid into the patient, and wherein the inner surface of the removable outflow channel defines the outflow channel lumen.

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